METALSMITH

WINTER 2001

volume 21 number 1
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Gerd Rothmann
Index Finger, Gold, 2000

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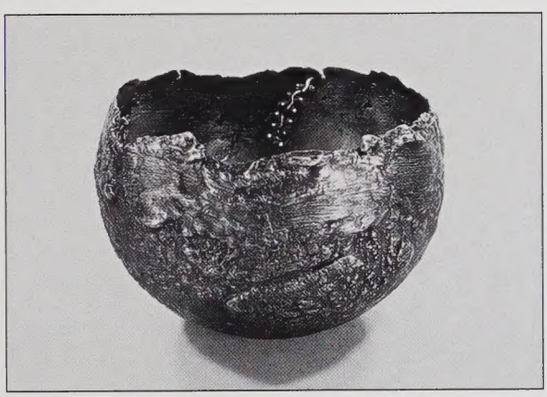

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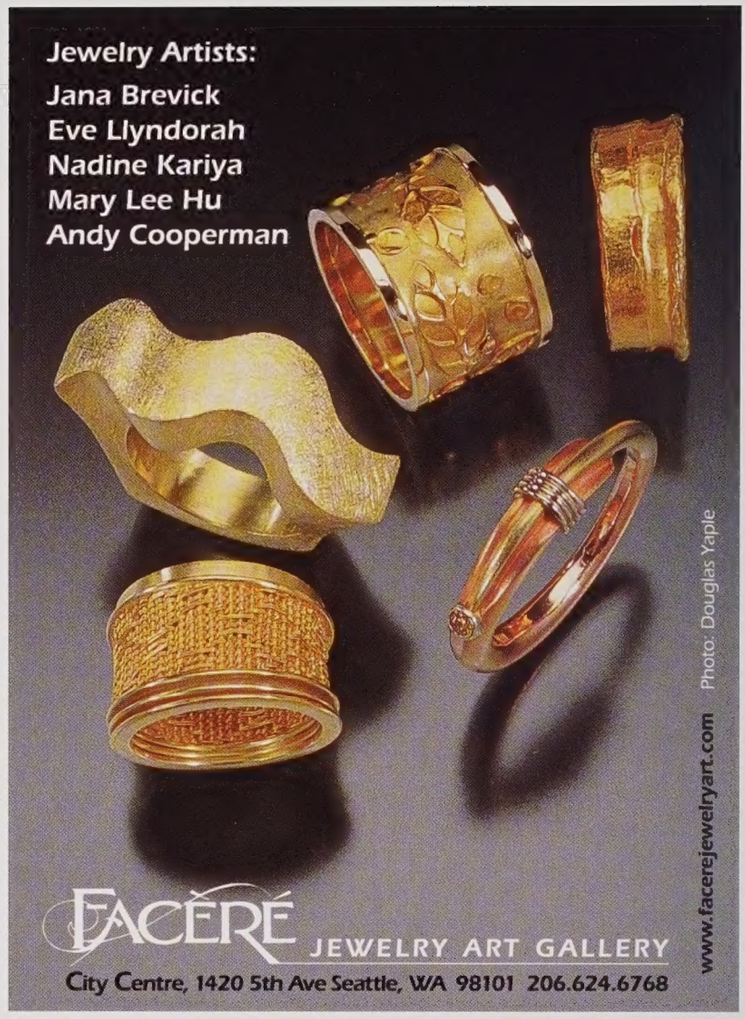

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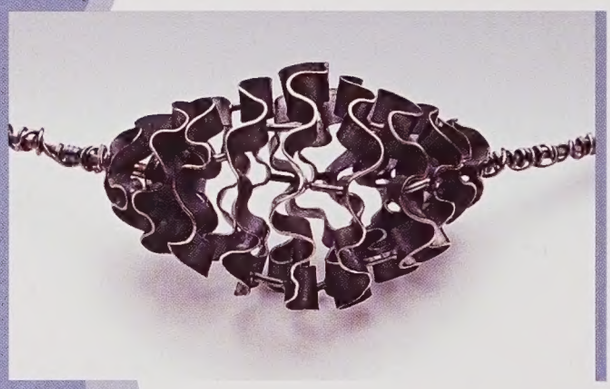

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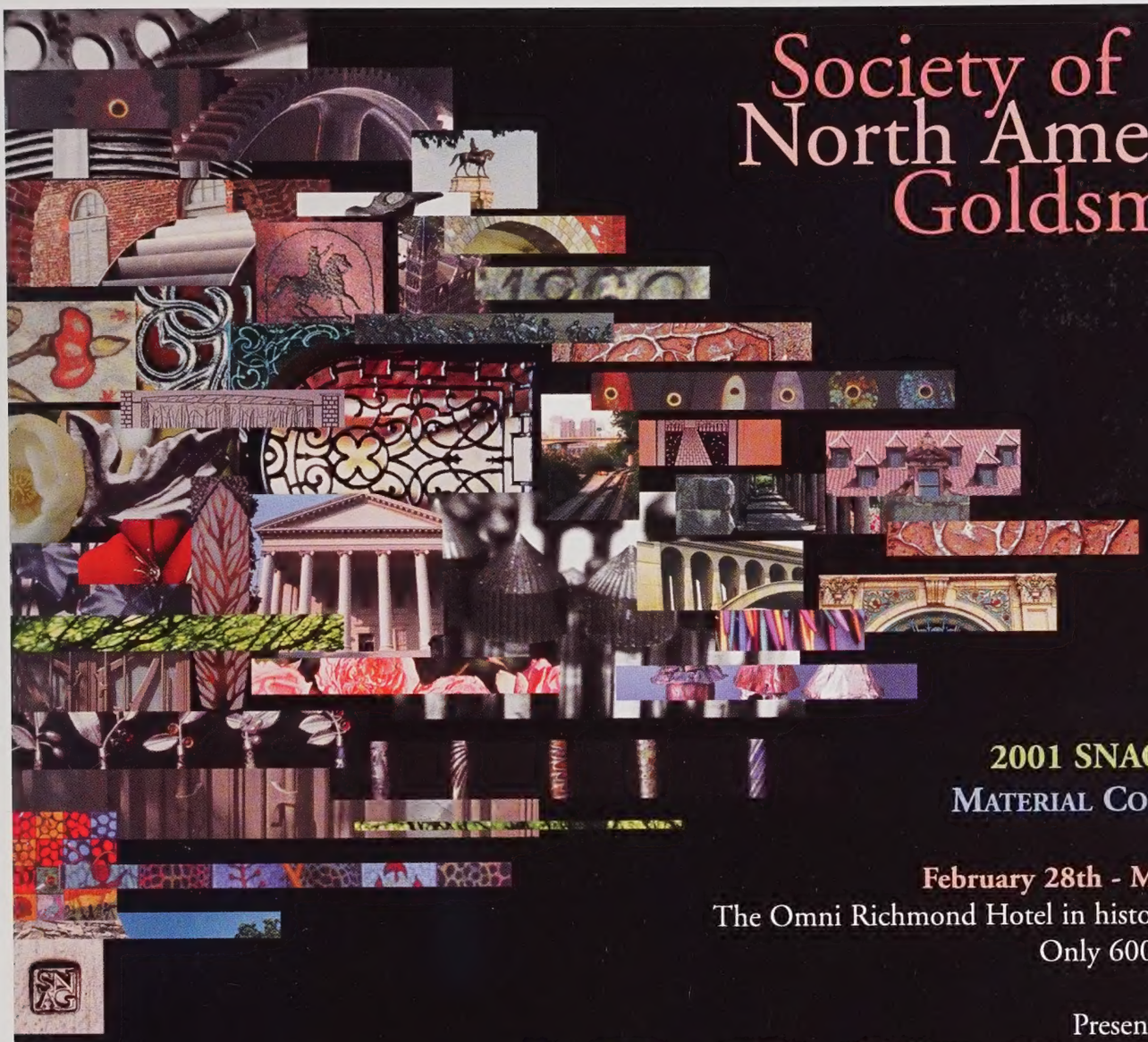

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CONTENTS

WINTER 2001

METALSMITH VOL 21 NUMBER 1

6 Editorial

column 8 From the Other Side *Phillip Steen*

display case 14 The Work of Todd Reed

16 Intervening in Amnesia: Jan Yager's Mnemonic Adornment *Tacey Rosolowski*

26 What's New in (Very) Old Gold? Robert Baines Shows All *Marjorie Simon*

34 The Value of Wood and Nickels - Jewelry by Kathy Buszkiewicz *Kate Stassen*

observations 42 The Work of Julia Turner

reviews 44 Bridging the Millennium *Rebecca Ramos*

45 Cornelia Parker *Heather White*

46 Attitude and Action *Yvonne Kulagowski*

47 Lily Yung *Barbara Isherwood*

47 Milestones *Valeta Vancza*

48 Sadie Wang *Jennifer Coppel*

49 Society of North American Goldsmiths

cover
Jan Yager
American Ruff, 2000
found clear plastic crack vials, found white and clear plastic crack vial caps, sterling bead, 2000 USA dime, 2000 Canada dime, sterling wire 21"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

top
Jan Yager
A.D.1990 Crack Vial and A.D.1000 American Indian Bone Tube Necklaces, 1990-1993
found clear plastic crack vials, white and clear caps, sterling cap, sterling chain, 18 x 0.6"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

middle
Robert Baines
Bracelet, 1996
silver-gilt, enamel, coke can

bottom
Kathy Buszkiewicz
Savior, 1996 (detail)
wood, U.S. currency
1 x 6"

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from the editor

FRANK LEWIS

Eight years ago I, somewhat suddenly, found myself immersed in a community of dedicated, tenacious, sometimes opinionated, always passionate craftspeople. Like most communities, not everyone agreed, there were various factions and intrigues, and I would experience the most egomaniacal and the most humble individuals over the course of a few minutes, a couple of phone calls, or during brief conversations at a SNAG conference. Some individuals never ceased promoting themselves, while others had to be coaxed and convinced, to simply send me a resume and a package of slides.

I have seen work that was moving, beautiful, inventive, clever, trite, poorly crafted, frightening, and breathtaking. I have admired the most simple of forms and the most baroque. I have watched some already accomplished makers continue to surprise and invent, and I have seen novices develop into some of the most accomplished makers in the field. Sadly, I have witnessed the passing of a number of luminaries, some of whom I was fortunate enough to get to know before they were gone.

My experience as the editor of *Metalsmith* has engendered a number of internal contradictions. On the one hand, I have been flattered by some as an important person in the field. On the other hand I have come to realize how large, expansive, and timeless the pursuit of excellence in the metal arts is and I have come to believe that no one individual, especially an editor, is any more important than any single maker. I have had makers thank me most profusely for coverage, while others have said such coverage made little if any difference to their careers or egos.

I now take leave of this community with conflicted emotions. I am excited by both new opportunities for me and for the magazine. The influx of new blood and energies will, surely, stir things up, re-focus attention, and generate new optimism. Yet I am saddened as I realize that I may well never see again some individuals who I have come to admire and respect. Invariably, I will, at times, be critical of what I see in future issues and I am sure too, that I, more often, will be jealous. "Why didn't I think of that?" "Why didn't I feature that artist, when I had the chance?"

I will miss the seemingly endless and admittedly sometimes tiresome debate between art and craft, the skirmishes between the academics and the marketplace makers, the dialogues positing the superiority of technique over theory and vice versa. I will miss the sense of community, the camaraderie, the folk legends and myths that come with the field, even the rivalries and partisan politics. But, most of all, I will miss the passion that can be seen in a maker's eye, when she/he speaks of the process of creating, the excitement exhibited by a collector when they show off a cherished piece from their collection, and the intensity with which a writer describes their discovery of a little known fact or bit of information.

I am sure that I will miss you all much more than I will be missed, and that is the way it should be. Good luck to all and thank you for a wonderful and rare opportunity. ■

FCL

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FROM THE OTHER SIDE

text Phillip Steen

My wife and I buy jewelry and sometimes flatware. We both enjoy looking at hollowware, but, we can't usually afford it. We are not "collectors." You know who I mean, the well heeled individuals with an unmistakable air and usually a flamboyant necklace or brooch. Go to a craft show or a gallery and you will immediately recognize them. The gallery assistant looks nervous, the person manning the craft booth suddenly seems distracted by your questions, scared that Mr. or Mrs. Big will leave the space before they are attended to. We don't mind. Though people like us are probably the artist's bread and butter, we understand that for many craftspeople a sale to an important person/collector comes with bragging rights and maybe even the opportunity for a piece to eventually enter an important museum.

We buy what we like, or what we think the recipient of a gift will like. We do not purchase a piece to stand too far out in a crowd or to make statements. My wife likes pieces that are comfortable to wear. I'm old fashioned enough to be uncomfortable with any thing more than a ring and a tie-tac. Some would say that we buy "safe" pieces. I guess that some of the "artsy" types think our taste is pretty conservative.

Yet, we still buy mostly from craft shows and small galleries, rather than jewelry stores. Why?

First of all we enjoy the event. Walking through and browsing, looking at some objects that we would never consider buying, and sometimes just seeing the outfits of some of the other people is fun. We have attended enough shows and galleries to recognize some of the same artists from year to year and we enjoy that we can see changes in the way the jewelry looks from show to show. At jewelry stores in the mall everything looks the same from year to year.

Usually the artists at the shows or the people running the gallery are friendly without being too pushy. Though there are a couple of booths that we never go to because we were once treated rudely, generally we have found that artists, and gallery people too, are more than willing to talk without appearing to be trying to close a sale. We are sometimes interested in how some jewelry is made; usually even a question that must seem dumb to a jeweler or gallery professional is answered patiently.

It seems to me that more so than at a gallery, the variety of prices and kinds of jewelry is greater at craft shows. Though certainly more expensive than costume and some jewelry store wares, the pieces in craft shows and galleries still seem to us to be "better buys."

A very special part of craft shows is getting to meet the artists. We like having a face behind the piece of jewelry. It also gives us a good feeling to support artists. It is probably silly, but if we are making a choice between two purchases, we usually end up going with the one by the artist who appears to need it more.

Some months ago, I called the editor of *Metalsmith* to tell him how much we liked the magazine, even if some of the articles are over our heads, I told him a little about our experiences as small time buyers of jewelry. He suggested that I might write up some of those opinions in a column as a way to let readers hear from the other side of the display case.

I thought that maybe these opinions would be more valuable if I wrote a list of our suggestions/responses. I'm not trying to tell anyone how to do their job. I'm just sharing an opinion, which Mr. Lewis said is what a column is for, so here goes:

Usually a question from a visitor is sincere, even though, to the professional, it may seem stupid. We don't want to know your secrets, we are just interested in some of the techniques, materials, and processes.

Sometimes, first time visitors/buyers don't always understand why plastic and glass may be as expensive as more costly materials. Share a little bit about the creative process with those who may not understand. Why do you chose a particular material?

One of the most effective things a craftsperson ever said to us during a very busy moment at her booth was: "I would love to tell you more, but right now my booth is swamped. Would you consider coming by later so we can have some time to chat?" We have tried to buy something from that woman every year since. At the least, we always make sure to check for her presence at a show.

Believe it or not, after we had taken a significant amount of time with one craftsperson, he then said to us: "Have you seen X's work over at booth 22? You might find it interesting." That statement did two things. First it let us know that he had paid attention to what we were saying and what we were interested in. Secondly, and probably more importantly, it indicated to us that the craftsperson was a nice guy. We remembered that, and not only did we end up buying a piece from both artists, we always seek out "Mr. Generosity" at every show we attend.

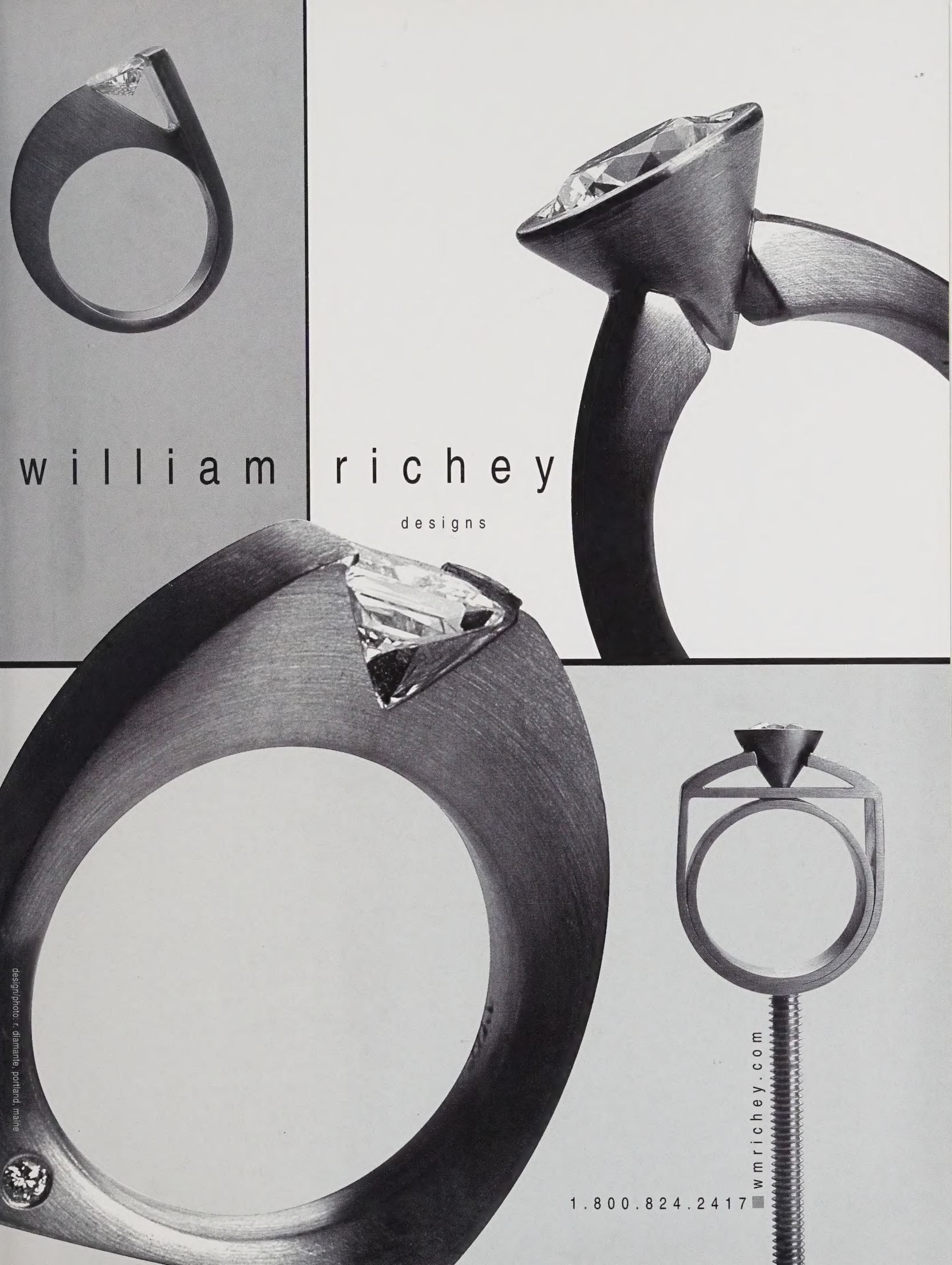
Remember, for some of us anything over a hundred dollars or so is an important purchase. If we come back again, it probably means we are thinking seriously about buying. We are not just trying to waste your time.

Most people understand that you are working and they are not there to take up your time with chit-chat, I started in sales so I know that some presentations end up taking time for little return. It comes with the territory. Don't jinx another sale because earlier, Mr. Motormouth made you miss your lunch. We are all individuals.

If Mr. and Mrs. Big enter your booth or gallery, it is perfectly O.K. to say "Why don't you look around for a bit, there are a couple of people whom I really must say hello to."

Magazines like *Metalsmith* help to teach us, the amateurs, about the field. But there are no magazines that makers can subscribe to, that teach them about us. Though for you, the maker, selling a piece may be little more than a financial transaction, for the patron a purchase is a commitment and maybe even the beginning of lifelong pursuit. That's, at least, the way it appears from the other side. ■

Phillip Steen is a midlevel executive at a large East Coast printing firm. He took one art course in college.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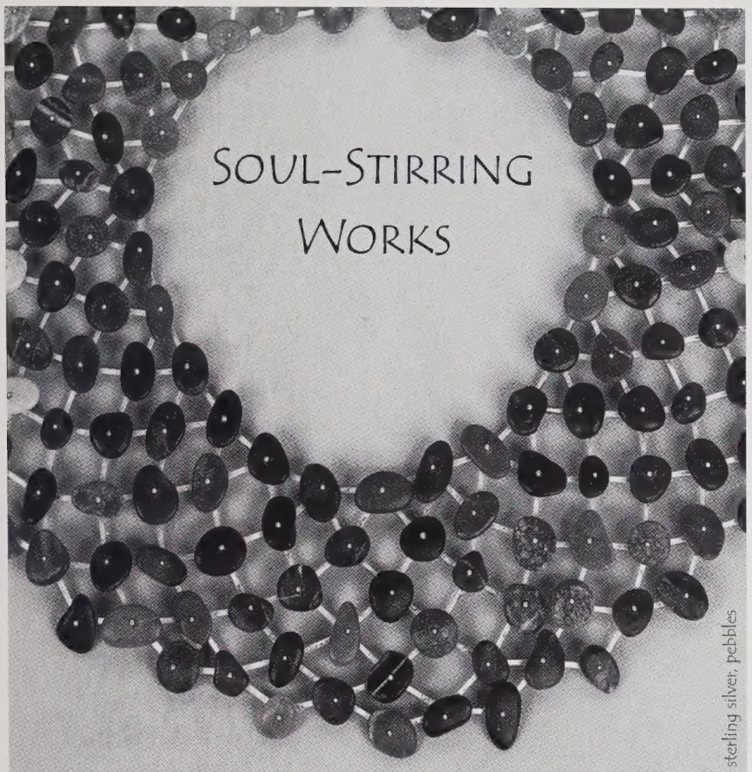

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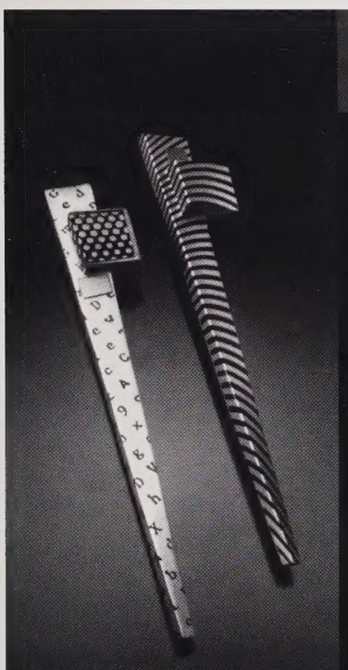

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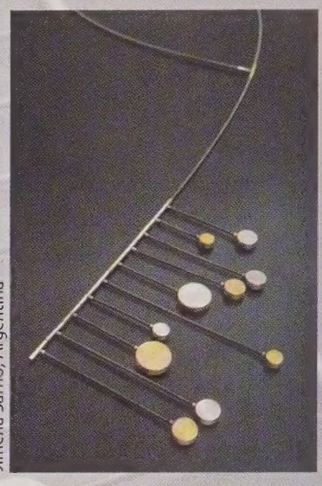
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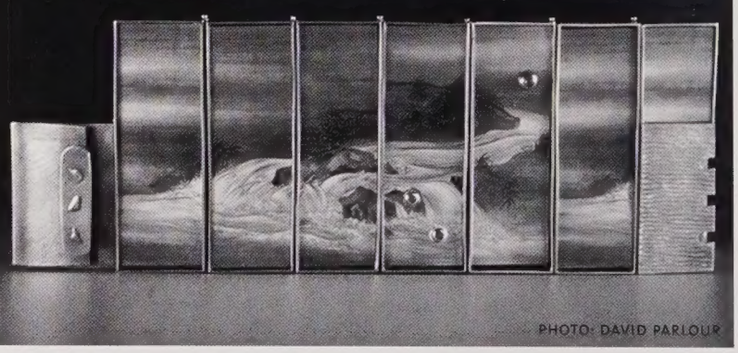
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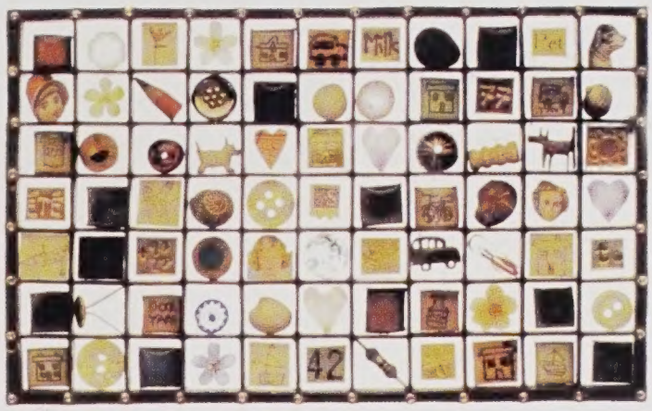

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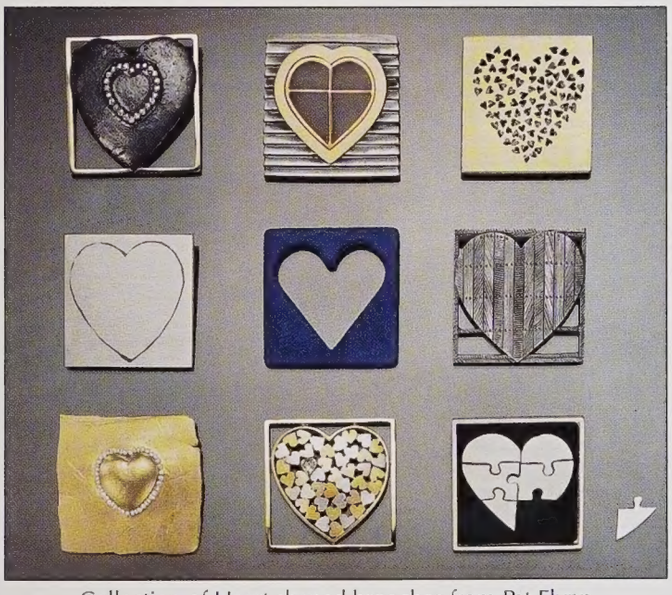

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Metalwork demands interaction. The weight and heft of an object, the surface texture, and the gradual way in which the material absorbs the body's heat all add dimensions that are specific to the craft and its objects. Todd Reed's *Rattles* add another level of pleasure. The quiet clicks and sing of metal against metal aurally animate an already lively surface. Textures wink and sparkle, rhythms whisper, as the process of wearing and interacting creates multiple layers of sensory delight.

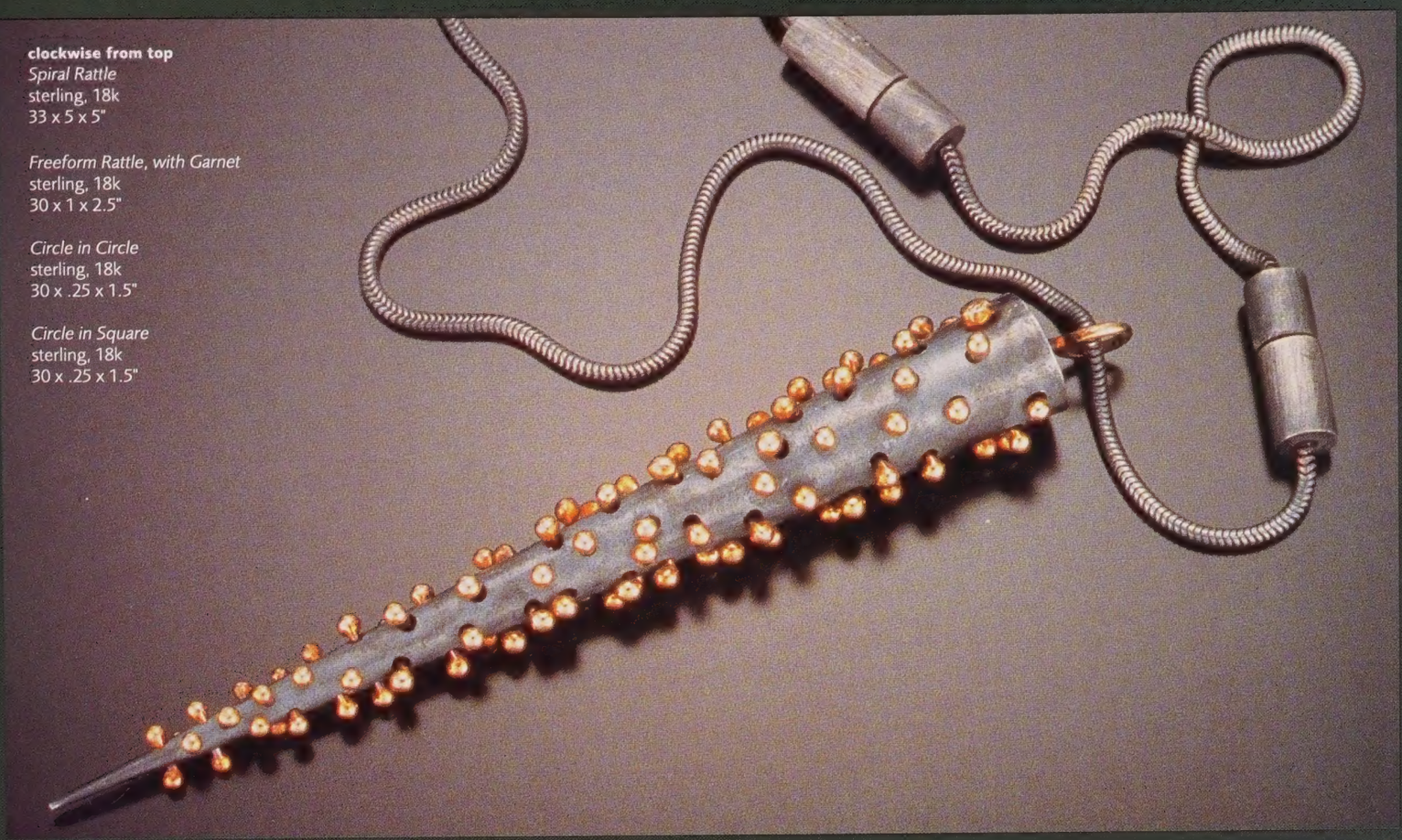
Square in Circle
sterling, 18k
30 x .25 x 1.5"

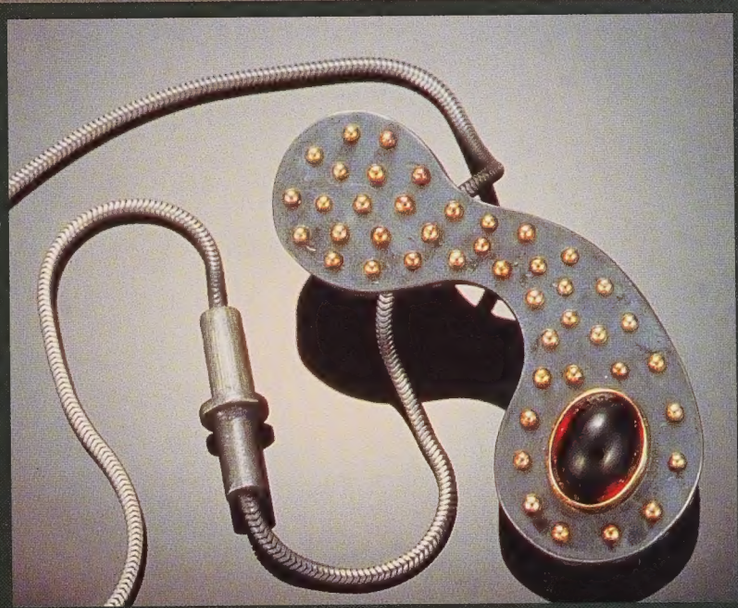
clockwise from top
Spiral Rattle
sterling, 18k
33 x 5 x 5"

Freeform Rattle, with Garnet
sterling, 18k
30 x 1 x 2.5"

Circle in Circle
sterling, 18k
30 x .25 x 1.5"

Circle in Square
sterling, 18k
30 x .25 x 1.5"





Butt Worry Strand, 1999
found cigarette butts, tassels
22.8"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

Intervening in Amnesia: Jan Yager's Mnemonic Adornment

text by Tacey Rosolowski

> In some ways I started thinking about myself as this realist jeweler....I'm not altering [things], this is it, here it is.... And then it started to speak in more ways. Jan Yager

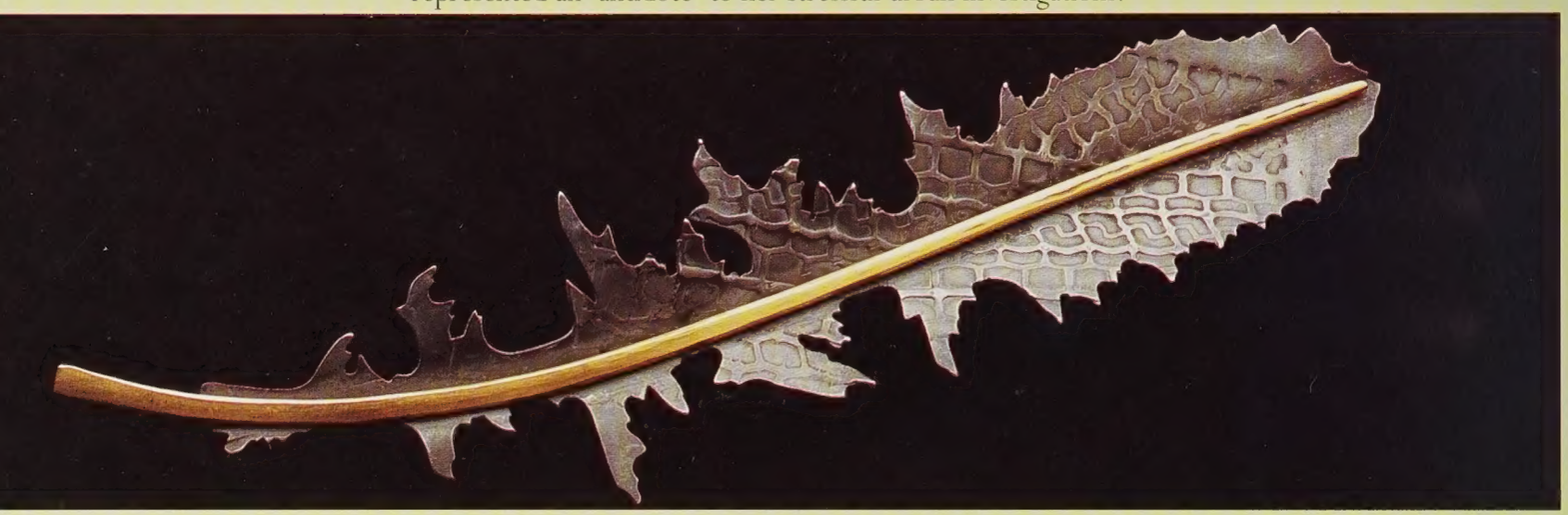
Jan Yager's self-perception as a realist jeweler came to full flower during the 1990s, through work on *City Flora/City Flotsam*, a series of pieces that document one facet of the urban reality of Philadelphia. Even before the inception of this series, Yager was a well-established figure in the craft. She was (and remains) a frequent lecturer and juror, the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships (including an NEA in 1984 and a grant from The Peter S. Reed Foundation in 2000), her work widely exhibited and published in craft journals and popular media. Her success at the time stemmed from her necklaces. With signature "puffed" and embossed metal beads and perforated rocks sliding on her unique segmented chain, Yager explored jewelry's "intimate scale and its power as a repository of meaning and sentiment."[1] This work echoed in the field as other jewelers began to experiment with movement, texture, shape, and complex forms.

Despite her gratifying career, Yager affirms that the sabbatical she took in 1990, and the ten years she devoted to *City Flora/City Flotsam*, drew her into a profoundly transformative period. She looks back and says, "I think...it's the first time that I really experienced the creative process to its fullest."[2] The resulting body of work draws on Yager's unique commitment to material and historical awareness. In *City Flora/City Flotsam*, Yager creates what she calls "memory devices" and "portraits of a specific place and time," pieces that have conceptual correlates in Post-Modernism and Post-Colonial criticism.

Sidewalk Brooch captures the fanning stems and leaves of a sturdy purslane, adaptive city flora that pops up in Philadelphia streets and sidewalks. "In a normal situation," Yager explains, "purslane would grow taller, but it knows its going to get walked on so it stays flat." This brooch is part of the subseries entitled, *American Mourning*, as is jagged-edged *Dandelion Leaf*, embossed with a tire tread pattern. Moodily ambiguous in dark, oxidized sterling silver, these weed-portraits record nature's resilience even while lamenting the contemporary balance of man and nature, where nature appears only through cracks in the urban shell.

American Breastplate is a complex and resonant portrait constructed of over 400 red, white, and blue crack vials, embellished with dice and a newly minted quarter commemorating the founding of Philadelphia. Research into Philadelphia history led Yager to the Lenni Lenape Indians, who occupied the region when Europeans claimed their portion of the New World; she adapted the breastplate from the Plains Indian tradition to symbolize the fate of all Native Americans under colonialism. Made in crack vials, this piece from the subseries, *American Dream*, invokes the legacy of racism, dislocation, and "open brutality," as Yager says, that indigenous peoples have suffered as a result of dealings with Europeans.

Such pieces emerged from a transformation in Yager's own perception. She had been living in Philadelphia since 1983, immersed in her necklace series and working with the rocks she had collected during her beachcombing days while a graduate student at RISD (from 1979-81). As she says, "I realized that I had never, ever glanced at where I was living." Unwilling to continue with work that didn't relate to her immediate environment, she narrowed her focus to the sidewalks around her studio, located just north of Philadelphia's city center. "Beachcombing," Yager collected pen tops, paper clips, buttons, cigarette butts, spent cartridge casings, and crack vials and syringes--detritus of everyday urban life, desperation, and violence. The vials and syringes exerted an allure, yet Yager admits her initial reluctance to use them, and confusion about how. "We put blinders on....And you don't want to know that there are other lives going on right at your door....I thought, I have to admit that this is here." She confesses that her metalworked floral pieces – portraits of nature's survival – represented an "antidote" to her stressful urban investigations.



above
Dandelion Leaf with Tire Tread Texture, 1997
sterling, 18k
7"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

After ten years of work, Yager has created a design vocabulary that stimulates both intellect and imagination with references to trade, imperialism, indigenous history, and contemporary social structure. She clearly draws on the device of the *trouvaille*, the found object, that has been a cornerstone of twentieth-century art and craft since André Breton. Yet, as *American Breastplate* demonstrates, Yager re-invigorates the radicality of this convention, raising its stakes by melding it with the Post-Modern strategies of adaptation (of past forms) and superimposition (of contemporary references over allusions to the past). In keeping with the most adroit of Post-Modern manipulations, Yager's work self-consciously creates a critical (and often ironic) awareness of historical distance in order to sharpen political focus on the present. The great force of her work has been recognized and documented in numerous interviews, lectures, and articles. With the decade-long project now coming to closure, Yager's *City Flora/City Flotsam* will be honored this spring with a solo exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

It is rare and controversial for contemporary adornment to invoke vast and *collective* networks of reference. Yager acknowledges this fact when she characterizes her series – In particular the crack vial work – as "mnemonic devices...These are more than just jewelry. They're retelling the memory of one particular place and one moment." Unlike personal and apolitical jewelry, Yager's pieces have much in common with what French historian Pierre Nora refers to as *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory. Nora points out that when the solidarity of traditional cultures has been replaced by mass cultures committed to values of accelerating growth and change, there is no collective memory or shared sense of "what the future should keep from the past"[3]: "we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left," and what we have is merely personal rather than collective memory.[4] In this context, museums, data bases, archives, even festivals and rituals function as *lieux de mémoire*--places where we preserve collective memory as life rages by.

above left
Blossoming Chicory Brooch, 2000
sterling, 18k
6 x 1.5"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

above right
Chicory Bud Brooch, 1997
sterling
7"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

For Nora, *lieux de mémoire* encode memories in a material, symbolic, and functional form – all features that apply directly to Yager's work. Moreover, her pieces force us to remember histories we would rather forget. An example is *American Collar*, which Yager constructed of 140 crack vials and 223 crack caps, using two syringes to stabilize the elements into a disk that refers to the Maasai wedding collar. She chose this form because the Maasai collar is commonly used as an example of African beadwork, and beadwork itself has come to symbolize the creativity and aesthetic skill of African peoples. Yager's contemporary collar reveals that this seemingly neutral representation is inherently political since it has roots in exploitative trade practices.

Three hundred years ago, as trade expanded in Africa, Europeans exchanged tubular beads for such goods as gold, ivory, and, most significantly, slaves. Some of their African trading partners used these beads in their beadwork. Yager observes that the "tubular beads are very similar in scale to the crack vials, [and] it all sort of came together, economics, slavery." *American Collar* underscores the political dimension of African beadwork. In place of an innocent representation of a traditional craft, Yager's collar creates a *lieu de mémoire* of an ugly marriage. The act of memory encompasses European intrusion into Africa, the African diaspora, and contemporary racism, inequity, and the slavery of addiction.

By recalling these hidden values and destructive processes, Yager's work effects a Post-colonial critique of the subtle, ongoing work of imperialism and the subjugation of people of color. The symbolic power is even stronger since this *lieu de mémoire* takes the (material and functional) form of personal ornament. The viewer can literally put on awareness of, and possible responsibility for, imperialist relations between the West and Africa, whites and blacks, capitalist and traditional cultures. Yager's design vocabulary casts a nuanced light on past and present alike. By historicizing our vision and touch, her pieces force us to re-imagine our position in the here and now.

Yager's personal qualities led her inexorably to such a project. She has always collected "flotsam," whether this meant beachcombing along the Atlantic coast, or collecting the detritus left by waves

A.D.1990 Crack Vial and A.D.1000 American Indian Bone Tube Necklaces, 1990-1993
found clear plastic crack vials, white and clear caps, sterling cap, sterling chain
18 x 0.6"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

of urbanites. She has long been fascinated by the power of small objects to capture memories of personal lives and significant public events. Born in Detroit, Michigan, she cites the history of the "Metallurgy Belt" as a strong influence on her artistic consciousness. She undertook the task of learning the history of jewelry craft (which she laments is still rarely a requirement of jewelers' education) and developed a personal maxim, "the farther you look back, the farther you can see forward."[5]

These interests and impulses were present during her work with the rock necklaces and foreshadowed her later work. From the outset, it was important to her to make objects possessing amuletic power. She describes the magnetic pull a specific necklace would exert on a customer, as if the two were made for each other. The strength of the bonds surprised Yager herself. She realized that "the impulse to collect and keep rocks is "so, so human" and that the aesthetic appeal is "about the rock itself and its power to conjure up a memory of place." In this sense the necklaces, though objects of personal adornment, also possessed the power to produce communal meaning on a small (and politically neutral) scale: they created a community bound by ties to similar pieces. Yager's *City Flora/City Flotsam* series greatly expands the cultural resonance while drawing on this same paradigm.

A catalyzing influence was a bone tube necklace she found at a flea market in New Mexico. Skeptical when the vendor described it as prehistoric American Indian, Yager's research confirmed that it was in fact over one thousand years old. The piece had "a power, a subtlety, a nuance" that Yager wanted in her work and struggled to define in her own terms:

> this person ... ate dinner, they threw the bone down, they picked it up later and said, 'What can I carve?' ... So I started thinking, what's my readily available material? I also had been listening to a lot of biographies and interviews of writers and artists and musicians, and everyone was saying, 'It's right here, whatever you're looking for, it's right here.' I kept thinking, ok, it's right here... It's not somewhere else, because this is what I know the most.

She set out to make a version of the bone necklace marked indelibly as "of this place and time" in Philadelphia. The first was of crack vials. She then explored other jewelry forms such as charm bracelets and Victorian-era guard chains (which she also collects) -- she replaced the rosettes with cast axially sliced crack vial caps, "the rosettes of today," that are specific to the center city. The results of such experiments were ironic, at times blackly comic -- as in *Crack Baby*, an interpretation of Barbara Bush's triple strand of pearls in crack vials. The form and material symbolically join the country's diversely stratified classes and critiques the Reagan-Bush "Just Say No" program that masks the historical roots of a complex social problem behind a message of individual self control. To document the fact that "these are very meditative issues," as Yager says, she made rosaries out of crack vials, and Middle-Eastern worry beads from cigarette butts and spent bullet casings. Research revealed that the Arabic word for prayer also means "bead." "That makes sense to me," Yager affirms.

For Yager, as for many jewelers, "sheer beauty for beauty's sake -- it's not really enough." Jewelry must "have something that unsettles you," one of the reasons she admires the work of Renée Lalique, who would "show you this beautiful thing and then there would be wasps flying around it. There was always some edge to it." The edge-iness of Yager's crack vial work comes in part from its sociological statement. But the more inflammatory sting comes from the materials: the crack vials and syringes themselves.

"A lot of people ... were just horrified that I had touched them, that I had brought them into the [studio] building." Rather than treating the skin as a surface to be glamorized, the crack vial work conjures images of the body's penetration, of bodily fluids, and of the body as a center for chemical processing and addiction. All of these categories take their current meaning and emotional gravity from the AIDS panic of the 1980s; they all play to a fear of "others," contact with whom can lead to permanent contamination, even uncontrolled epidemic in the *social* body. Susan Sontag has observed that the metaphors used to describe AIDS draw on "the language of political paranoia, with its characteristic distrust of a pluralistic world."[6]

This simmering horror supports our cultural amnesia: emotions erect a barrier, we are legitimized in blinding ourselves to crack vials on the sidewalk, we can forget the history that implicates each of us in the social problem. Yager broke through this barrier, however, and "It all started to make sense ... the story of the bead and the story of being bound economically--how all those things are interrelated and where we are now is related to where we were." Insistent that she is "not a scholar," Yager nevertheless develops a visual vocabulary for specific historical references. She thus avoids a problem common in Post-Modern artwork; in art critic Hal Foster's words, "many artists borrow

promiscuously from both historical and modern art. But these references rarely engage the source--let alone the present--deeply."[7] Adrift in decontextualized metaphors, the artist creates pastiche rather than historical perspective.

Yager insures her work's conceptual and aesthetic weight with her well-grounded historical references. A key example is *American Wampum Belt*, based on the Native-American wampum belts used to document treaties and contracts. Yager examined the wampum belt that the Lenni Lenape Indians allegedly gave to William Penn in 1683 to denote the right to occupy land. (The transaction took place only a mile from Yager's studio.) The wampum belt is an example of how, as historian Penny Sparke says, design is "formed and sustained" by economics, politics, and technology "and, as a result, designed artefacts act as cultural ciphers."[8] Yager's research revealed how the belt takes on such a status. There is a link, for example, between the use of belts for recording transactions and the materials used to construct them: wampum, beads made from sea shells, were used for currency. In addition, the Lenni Lenape lived close to the shoreline and monopolized wampum's manufacture (a position strengthened when Dutch colonists provided them with more advanced drills). Short-supplied with European currency, the colonists also used wampum, provided by the Lenni Lenape, as a medium of exchange. Economics, politics, and technology intertwine in the wampum belt (as they do in African beadwork). Materially and symbolically, the belt is cultural capital, and it is not surprising that it was a significant object that, as Yager explains, had "a mnemonic purpose, it held a memory of a race or people."

More than any other idea, the "memory device" has proved key to her understanding of her own project. *American Wampum* Belt links William Penn's transaction to contemporary decisions about land use, which must confront the question, "How do we keep the car at bay and still be able to maneuver?" Using shoelaces to lash the crack vial caps together (in place of the traditional sinew), Yager depicted a pristine white SUV, belching exhaust as it heads westward along the broken white lines of a highway. She added her signature element: a crack vial cap cast in metal and embossed with a tire tread to represent a contemporary geometry and texture. The piece's subtitle, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, alludes to this geometry's inexorable spread westward across cities, suburbs, and rural environments.

As a mnemonic device, *American Wampum Belt* clearly demands that we, as a culture, remember the effects of autos and urbanization on the balance of man and nature and recall, too, the fate of indigenous peoples displaced in the wake of Manifest Destiny. Its most incisive statement, however,

SIDEBAR ON POST-COLONIALISM

"Post-colonialism" is a very broad term for the critical and political work of resistance to colonial control and imperialism. While many regions of the world have been politically de-colonized, any colonial presence alters social structure and cultural practice so that the effects of imperialism endure. "Imperialism" is defined as the set of beliefs and social practices by which one culture asserts its presumed superiority (political, economic, racial, moral, spiritual, etc.) over another, establishing a context where the subjugated population must define itself (negatively) with respect to imposed norms. Edward Said's Orientalism was the first major Post-colonialist study to show how the West could (and can) justify imperialist practices because of negative assumptions about "exotic" lands and non-white "others."

Other Post-colonialists examine the varied results of such beliefs. In Africa, Australia, the US, and many other parts of the world, indigenous peoples have been displaced from their homelands and have had their traditional cultures, languages, and religions denigrated and suppressed by Western values and practices. Post-colonialist writers aim to discover their voices, questioning how imperialist notions filter their self understanding. While rejecting the idea that they might regain an uncorrupted indigenous identity, they capture the diverse richness of experiences that have of necessity taken shape in relation to imperialist presences. This is equally true in regions such as the Caribbean, where Western domination has essentially exterminated the indigenous peoples, replacing the non-white population with African and other peoples brought in via the slave trade. Post-colonialists document (and celebrate) how such dislocated peoples can actively create new, hybrid cultures. They are agents who create cultural change (that also spills over into political confrontation and revolution).

A Post-colonialist spirit runs through Henry John Drewal and John Mason's *Beads, Body and Soul: Art and Light in the Yoruba Universe*, which describes the relationship between Yoruba beading in Africa and regions of the Yoruba diaspora (Yoruba peoples comprised two-fifths of the slaves transported to Brazil and Cuba, and one-sixth of those brought to American plantations [Drewal and Mason, 90]). In Salvador, Brazil, for example, (the city with the largest population of people of African descent in the world [Drewal and Mason, 188]), beading serves as a transcultural visual vocabulary. It signals the wearer's simultaneous identification with both Brazil and Africa. It also addresses specific Brazilian experience, binding traditional religious practices to Catholicism and expressing political allegiance to the Black Movement.

Yoruba priest John Mason asks, "How does someone become a spokesperson for a culture of which he or she has no desire or intention of becoming an internal part?" (Drewal and Mason, 177). This question suggests why many Post-colonialists would be critical of Yager's project, since she is a white, middle-class American, using indigenous forms for her own purposes. They would view this as another imperialist appropriation that homogenizes the diversity of African, African American, and Native American experience.

From the outset Yager was concerned over public response to her use of indigenous (and Western) forms to symbolize diverse groups of people: "I don't want people to misunderstand what I'm trying to say. I'm not trying to zero in on a particular type of people." She was very reluctant to display her crack vial pieces individually because they are closely tied, conceptually and she sought to document "the three players three hundred years ago: the Indians, the colonists, and the slaves and the triangle of trade."

Yager brings this triangle to the present as well. She adapts indigenous forms to create a visual language by which the West implicates itself as a responsible agent in the ongoing history of imperialist process. Her desire to create pieces that function as mnemonic devices is critical here: amnesia is one means by which enduring imperialist notions make themselves invisible. Yager creates a lexicon to recall history from imperialist amnesia and make it part of conscious cultural memory. In that sense, her work participates in Post-colonial resistance.

Three Chicory Necklaces, 1995-1999
sterling, 18k
1.5"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

Shells and Pebbles, 1999
brass spent bullet casings, found white quartz pebbles, 18k bead, gold-filled chain
19 x 1.5"
Photograph by Jack Ramsdale

emerges through the relation of materials to image, which function symbolically in the manner of *Crack Baby* to critique class power. Yager observes that crack is a form of urban currency. She thus weaves the SUV (a quintessential middle-class symbol of status and financial success) from a "currency" that threatens self-satisfied middle-class values. "We have this image of people that involve themselves with these things," she says, "so I started trying to expand the image of who it would be." Crack and addiction are not relegated to the poor and people of color, however vigorously public perception tries to situate both as marginal to mainstream experience.

Yager's most recent piece, *American Ruff* invokes these issues even more strongly. Using silver wire, Yager wove together 943 clear plastic vials and white caps in the form of the lace collars worn by the wealthy Northern Europeans in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Subtle variations (from discoloration) enhance the lacy quality and conceal the nature of the materials from the casual glance, while the fringed wired edging recalls chain-linked fence or even barbed wire. The tension between past and present establishes the symbolic resonance.

Ruffs were worn by owners of the ships that circulated between Europe, Africa and the New World, transporting goods, colonists, and slaves--they were the emerging class of European capitalists who would amass enormous wealth, all from the comfort of their offices.[9] *American Ruff* serves as a mnemonic device for the results of their imperialist machinations. "They were the unaffected parties," as Yager observes, and yet they were the entrepreneurial movers who have contemporary correlates in such figures as drug dealers who keep product moving without ever indulging themselves; or perhaps even more specifically, the heads of corporations, who control their empires from far away, using Third World children to produce running shoes and exploiting the media to transform their product into a status symbol, which then lures American youth to sell drugs so they too can buy a piece of the American Dream. *American Ruff* glows as brightly as the dream, and it invokes the complex irony of exploitation, desire, and desperation that weaves through social classes and across races and continents.

Such resonances are more powerful because of the pieces' appealing tactile quality. Yager's breastplate, wampum belt, and ruff conform easily to the body. The many styles of caps, with their teeth marks (left when users removed the caps) and spots of wear, add a tactile interest that invites exploration. The pieces compel and disturb by seducing us -- sensually and imaginatively -- into contemplating repellent materials and ideas; they let us touch history as it intertwines with individual lives. Mnemonic devices, *lieux de mémoire*, portraits, cultural ciphers --Yager's pieces force a cultural memory of the material *durability* of age-old conflicts, racism, and exploitation.

This means that the series of objects she calls flotsam are inextricably tied to the floral portraits as well. We find them in a jumble on the sidewalk; the history we must remember is contained even in the weeds we step on. Many of them, as Yager observes,

> are the result of trade between nations i.e., Queen Anne's lace, chicory, purslane, prickly lettuce....the quest to discover new land was very much a search for new cash crops. Imagine the world economy *sans* tobacco, tea, sugar, corn (grain alcohol), coca (cocaine, Coca Cola), cocoa (chocolate), rubber (tires etc.) All New World, nonessential, human stimulants that because of their addictive nature guarantee repeat sales.... *City Flora* (immigrant plants) and *City Flotsam* (containers for plants with addictive qualities) are really both evidence of the same thing, not just sharp contrasts ... but two sides of the same coin.

Critic Patricia Fumerton affirms that "[d]ecoration....alludes to a world of cultural value that could not otherwise be represented except by means of oblique, allusive ornament."[10] The majority of contemporary jewelry alludes to the primacy of individualism over collective experience. Jewelry offers us the jeweler's private vision, it confirms his or her unique expressivity and, by extension, the individuality of the wearer.

Yager's work began with a private experience of altered perception. However, when she fixed her eyes on the sidewalk, history surfaced, like a plant emerging through a crack. The "realist" objects she created as a result stretch the limits of conventional decorative allusion, taking us to territories of cultural repression, so we come back touched by a collective history spanning over 300 years.[11] She never invites us into nostalgic historicism: we do not see the past replicating itself (ineffectively) in forms of the present, and then long for something lost (another trap of Post-Modern manipulations). Jan Yager is less sentimental. She is more "radical," to use Foster's term, because she "sees the new in the old."[12] Her realism re-visions the past, whose meaning is altered, bound to and haunted by apparitions of the present. ■

"Jan Yager: *City Flora/City Flotsam*", Design Now: Twentieth Century Gallery, 4 April - 4 July 2001
Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Opening & Artist Lecture: Tuesday, 4 April 2001

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Notes

1 Yager 1990, 88.
2 All unfootnoted quotations are taken from personal interviews conducted with the artist between 3/2000 and 9/2000.
3 Nora, 7.
4 Ibid, 7.
5 Yager, 1999.
6 Sontag, 18.
7 Foster, 16.
8 Sparke, xix.
9 The closure of *American Ruff*, created by intertwining two dimes, reinforces the historical dialogue between the Old and New Worlds and past and present. Both dimes were minted in the year 2000. One was produced at the mint not far from Yager's studio. The mint is located at the site where the Lenni Lenape produced wampum. The other dime was minted in Canada and carries the image of the Queen of England.
10 Fumerton, 21-2.
11 Only when viewed from the narrow perspective of the present do Yager's allusions appear unusually expansive or beyond the bounds of ornament's reach. Historically, in Western as well as non-Western traditions, ornament has drawn on visual languages capable of creating linkages between past and present (heraldry is only one example). Mass culture, however, has left this tradition far behind and can regard it with suspicion. James Trilling says, "It is as though implicit or symbolic communication, no matter how specific and accessible in its own terms, were inherently insincere because it requires the conscious, deliberate mediation of a sense of history between seeing and understanding. We can easily forget that in many cultures previous to our own, such mediation was taken for granted" (52). Yager's work demands that we re-discover our interpretive skills and use them to create collective, politicized symbols rather than private universes of meaning.
12 Foster, 20.

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Bracelet, 1996
silver-gilt, enamel, coke can

What's New in (Very) Old Gold? Robert Baines Shows All

text by Marjorie Simon

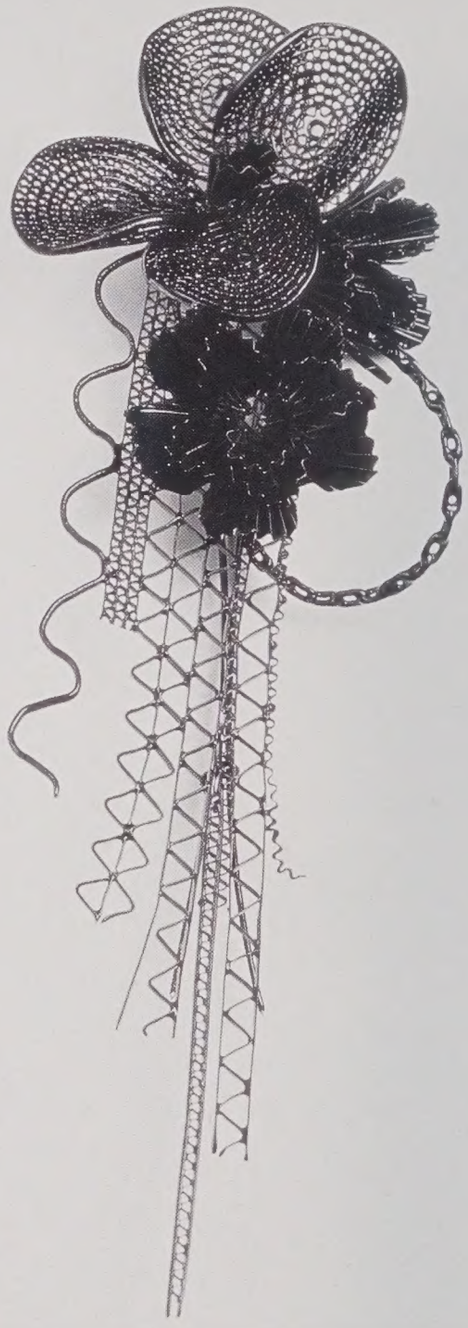
"In order to use color effectively it is necessary to recognize that color deceives continually." Josef Albers [1]

All color is deception, an illusion based as much on context, memory, and association as the physical wavelength and the physiological mechanism of sight and perception. In using color effectively an artist relies on an atavistic response somewhere off the cerebral map, an emotional, not a visual interpretation that elicits associations having little to do with the object in question. For example, the red that stands for Coca-cola, so ubiquitous that even Josef Albers used it to illustrate the elusiveness of color memory, may still be perceived differently by different people.

When Australian goldsmith Robert Baines uses Coke red on finely constructed wire filament jewelry, he expects that the color will be nearly universally perceived as such, transmuted to another object. It carries its subliminal associations with it, and the mind's eye expands its meaning to accept them both. Baines uses Coke red to establish an absolute of shared perception out of something we

have been taught is relative, that is, color itself. The source of the color may be shards of plastic or discarded cans, those found objects that turn up nowadays more often than beach stones. What are we to make of jewelry that may be described as a marriage of Etruscan filigree and bicycle reflectors? In Baines' hands such materials do more than transcend their origins in Etruscan and Greek gold, they subvert them while formulating an exegesis of the color red. In an ongoing series called *a redevent* Baines takes red seriously, choosing Coke red to confound the ancient designs he understands literally from the inside out.

The catalogues that document Baines' exploration of the color red bring the point home relentlessly.[2] The cover of *Bloodier than Black* shows a scarlet-costumed bull fighter being lifted off the ground, gored in the groin by the horn of the attacking bull. The cover of *The Intervention of Red: redevent part 3* also uses bullfight imagery, but here at least the matador has the upper hand. The deliberate choice of this blood sport belies the classical designs that repose within. Hewing closely to their classical origins, voluptuous gold wire fabrications have been embellished with industrial powdercoat, red plastic, and coiled segments of red Coke cans. They are a witty and intellectual conceit which is enriched by the viewer's knowledge of the originals.



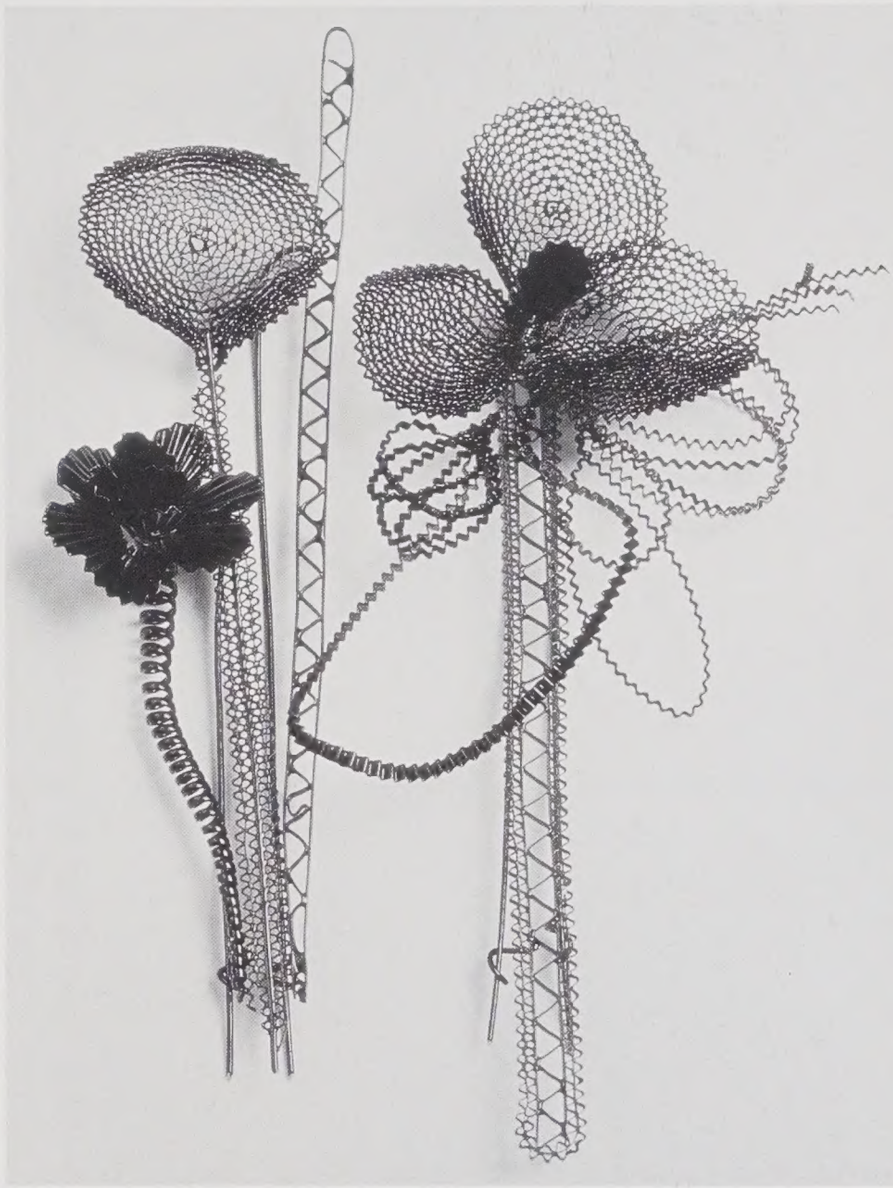
right
Brooch No. 24, 1998
silver, powder coat
8 x 2.8 x 1.2"

below
Brooch No.122, 1999
silver
7.24 x 6.08 x 1.8"

Baines has used wire to construct objects as diverse as a table, and a large red trumpet and brooches reminiscent of Victorian mourning jewelry. Several recent filigree bracelets, perhaps Etruscan in origin, seem to show an orientalizing effect of referencing the Asian subcontinent. His award winning *Spray Brooch* from the *Bloodier Than Black Series* of 1998 is a three-foot tall confection of architectural scale filigree resembling nothing so much as a hat Oscar Wilde might have worn. Based on a structure of a straight line and a crimped line, Baines' wire works vibrate with coiled energy. They often give the impression of trying to contain curly hair on a humid day. Like a bouquet

of greenery, they fan out to create ever larger fronds, but sentimentality is cut with the astringent use of red: bloody, scarlet, vermillion; a red as striking as that used by Ingmar Bergman in his 1972 film *Cries and Whispers*.

Baines' investigation of red has been facilitated by the application of space-age materials to his Etruscan-based fabrications. In addition to using a faceted red plastic light reflector in a classical setting, Baines applies powdercoat to achieve the color saturation he desires. Powdercoat is a method of electrostatically applying pigment to metal, most commonly used in large household or industrial appliances such as washing machines. Its extremely fine particles make it ideal for filigree because it can be sprayed onto the structure and every surface is covered. The red is a bright, fully saturated crimson, and it looks somewhat like still-wet enamel paint. Occasional use of black for contrast, as in many of the *Bloodier than Black* brooches, highlights the red-ness even more.



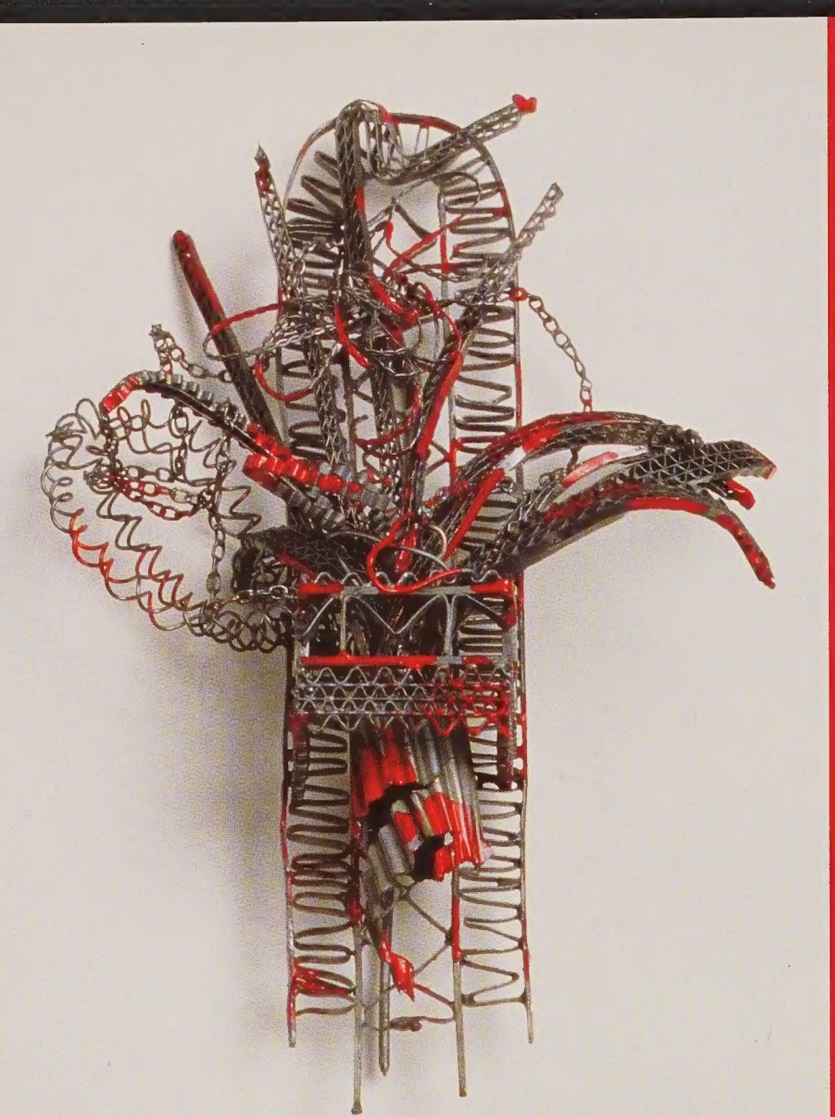
Brooch No. 29, 1998
silver, powder coat
7.28 x 3.6 x 1"

Baines appears to embrace all antiquity, not limiting himself to the unparalleled Etruscan and Greek gold wire work from about 600-500 BCE that is his alleged specialty. Victorian mourning jewelry also comes in for commentary, as he appears to plait silver wire and blacken it. The newest brooches evolve from nosegays of romantic flowers with nodding tendrils to densely packed and elaborate constructions with double pin stems in which the use of line is as free as a gesture drawing. Despite their almost whimsical surface appeal, many carry political messages as well. An autobiographical brooch features red bolts and screws and kangaroos. How is the world held together anyway?

Not solely a historian, Baines considers himself a contemporary practitioner, interested in the process of granulation, by which he means not merely the use of granules, but making fine jewelry using copper carbonate to facilitate the fusing process. In this case it's wire, fine structures where soldering and fusion are out of the question. For this method the models are in antiquity.

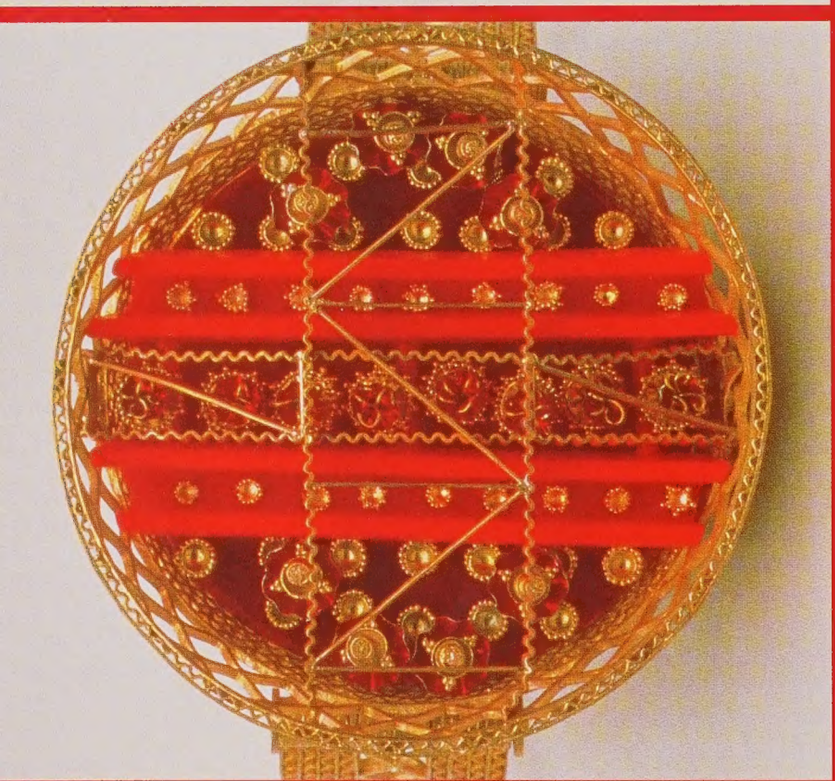
To find them Baines went to Europe and the United States beginning in 1979, visiting most of the major public collections and looking at the pieces, mainly in the context of joining. At that time he incorporated the techniques of powder solder and cold assembly into a more contemporary expression. In the powder solder he followed the example of 16th century artisan Benvenuto Cellini but he invented his own method of reclaiming scrap to pour a very thick ingot, putting it in a lathe, and running a big bastard file across the surface. The filings fall onto a sheet of paper below and are then mixed with flux to a mud-like paste and painted on all the contact areas. What Baines discovered from looking at the historical works, including 19th century fakes of other pieces from antiquity, and from looking at what he calls "manufacture and the context of manufacture," meaning literally, made by hand, enabled him to build the big silver wire constructions of *The Spray Brooch* and *The Trumpet*.

Consistent with his belief in historical specificity, Baines uses the ancient techniques in his own work only when the materials and the idea support them. The discoveries he made in his research have made possible the enormous wire filigree structures, but he solders them with a torch, not in a kiln. In other words, he is not interested in the historical solutions *per se*, but prefers that the solutions "come in the context of the subject, the choices of materials to convey that subject."[3] An analogy that comes to mind is playing Mozart on period instruments: what purpose is served by reproducing the putative sound when there might be much to be gained from reinterpretation? While he eschews slavish reproduction, Baines does appreciate entering into the spirit of "sitting



left
Brooch No.124, 1999
silver, powder coat
3.68 x 2.6 x 1.48"

below
Brooch, 1996
gold, silver, plastic
3.48 x 3.48 x .64"



above
Bracelet, 1995
gold, plastic, coke can
2.8 x 2.64 x 2.64"

right
Brooch No. 125, 1999
silver, powder coat
4.2 x 2.48"

down and making a historical piece with all its authenticity, the blowpipe, making the wire out of ribbon, firing up the charcoal, putting the piece on the charcoal, that's the primary heat source, and [going] with the blowpipe." Mentally and spiritually entering another realm is its own reward in itself.

Baines' historical research has followed several bodies of work and styles found in a number of locations, be they tombs or "hoards" around the Mediterranean. Beginning with a type of Etruscan earring known as a baule (pronounced bay-ool), he hypothesized that "technical factors determine stylistic interaction," a notion that had not been researched as much as the stylistic aspect of the work. Working with his own sequential hand-drawn "maps," he demonstrated the use of copper diffusion rather than solder for such fine work.

By the 4th century BCE the Greeks used heat to construct delicate component parts which they then cold connected in order to assemble complex structures, but the secret of copper-salt diffusion remained unexplained until the 1930s, when it was discovered that "a mixture of copper carbonate, water and fish glue was used to hold the granules in place and on heating the copper fused with the gold to create a solder-less join."[4] Knowing how to coat the granules with copper enabled the goldsmith to produce extremely fine results (absent, for example, in the otherwise accomplished goldwork of New World peoples of Central America). The 19th century Roman firm of the Castellani family also attempted to discover methods of Greek and Etruscan fabrication for the purpose of supplying contemporary patrons with copies of designs that were being unearthed in the middle of the century. Despite attempts to keep the jewelry historically accurate, the Castellanis never used the technology of the era to reproduce Etruscan granulation without solder, even though the Roman author Pliny, in the 1st century, had already described a method of "heating to melting point a mixture of gold filings and powdered charcoal."[5]

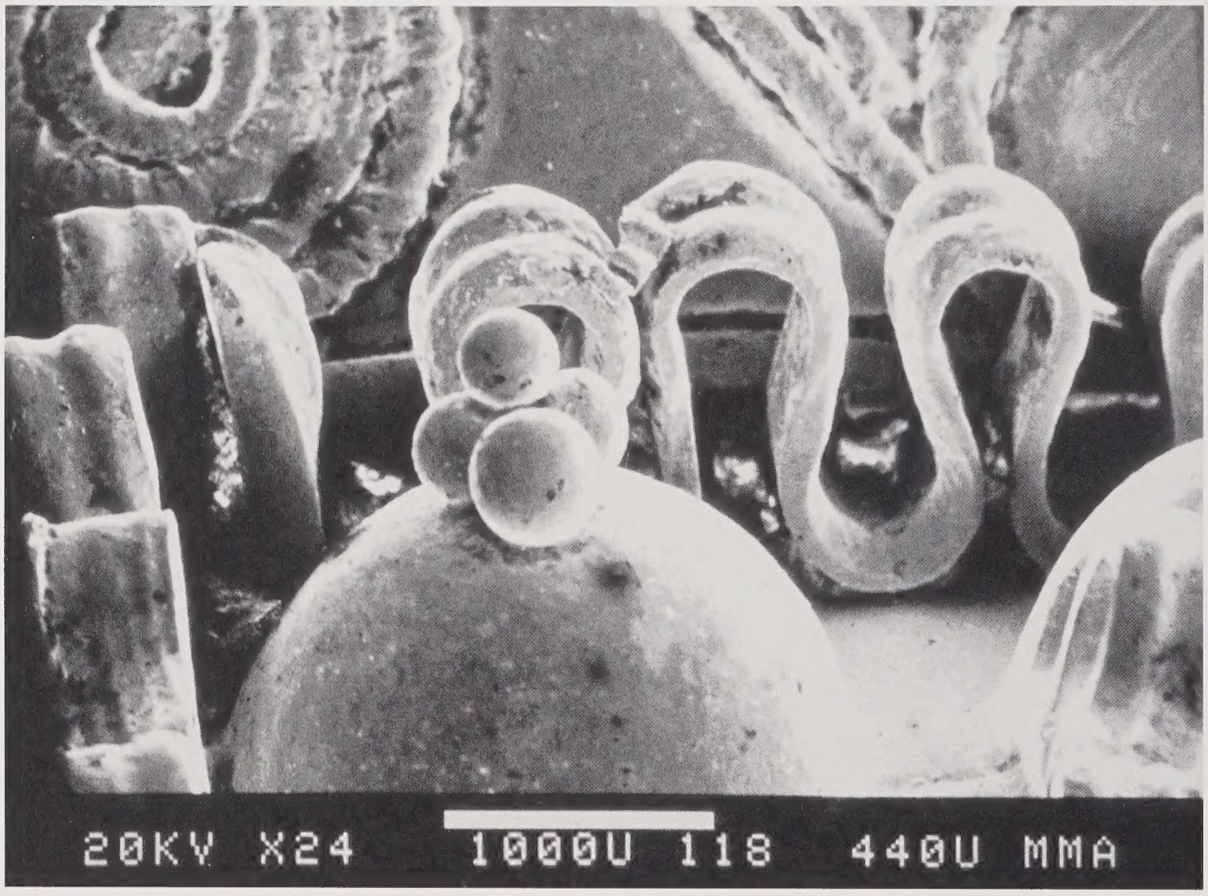
Baines illustrates his research with slides and drawings that reach deeply into the structure of the ancient work. With the aid of the scanning electron microscope at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York he is able to determine that the ancient goldsmiths compensated for temperature problems in fusing by fabricating component parts and cold connecting them. The microscope reveals all, the pattern of grain growth, the presumptive temperature, whether fusion was the result of fabrication or funeral pyre, whether the granules were made of wire or sheet. He even discovers mistakes which were left in and not done over; if a spot perforated because it was too thin, a patch might be just stuck over it, or a melted blob left on a pattern of granulation. Despite some similarity in design motifs, magnification reveals the lines scribed by the Etruscans as preliminary guides for the placement of granules; Egyptians apparently did not scribe such lines. Subsequent fusion would then cover up the lines, but they remain visible under even slight magnification. Ancient work was not signed, of course, and even stylistic innovation was not encouraged. Nonetheless individual differences surface. Some are the result of the materials themselves, such as inclusions of platinum that crop up out of the softer gold "like a fingernail." Others, such as handedness show up millennia later to distinguish one maker from another; a reverse twist indicates a left-handed smith. In a single piece the wire work will be twisted one way or the other, never mixed, suggesting more than one maker.

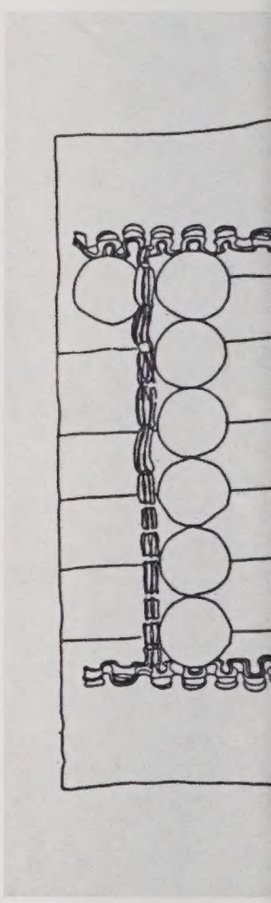
Using the SEM and conducting fabrication trials, Baines discovers what Etruscan goldsmiths did. Working with the micrographs he makes schematic drawings of his own observations which then serve as maps for sequencing the fabrications. He takes as an example one of a group of eight cube-shaped gold beads, about 23 mm on a side, that came into the Egyptian department of the Museum. There appear to be two groups of similar beads which nonetheless reveal some subtle and fascinating differences. One type has been made in one strip with a lap join. One group includes a Greek-style repoussé portrait set in a framed niche, while the other bears no portrait. Since the Greeks had no draw plates, one way of making wire was by forging a long thin strip and cutting off a narrower strip with a chisel, which leaves a distinctive bright burnished edge visible under magnification. But in one group the frame around the portrait was made from wire, not sheet, suggesting that more than one goldsmith made the two groups of otherwise similar beads.

Little by little the idiosyncracies of the workers emerge and Baines begins to connect with them as living practitioners. When he first began to make the baule earrings they were much heavier than the originals, which were all under 2 grams. Studying the variations in fabrication against the fairly constant weight of the earrings led him to suspect that the workers were given a specific amount of gold to work with and they had to weigh it at the end. Once Baines has made the pieces himself he often experiences some of the same problems he notices in the originals, such as the problem of

burning in the corners. The cube beads in particular are extremely thin, and the originals still bear the remains of some plaster, which of course is a modern addition, but they would have been filled with resin or gum for stability.

By making repeated samples and heating them under varying conditions Baines is able to reproduce the same variations he observes in the originals. He can work backward to discover patterns of recrystallization. He can determine why in a complex earring decorated with granulation and layered with rosettes, the underlying gold sheet, which Baines identifies as the substrate, has been burned, but the ball on the very top layer of rosettes is still round and in pristine condition, with no apparent flaws. He concludes that the decorative flowers are component parts that have been fabricated separately and stacked up over a central tube, then capped with a ball heated just to fusing. In a way, the research generates its own future research, as each clue in the ancient mysteries leads to many others.[6]





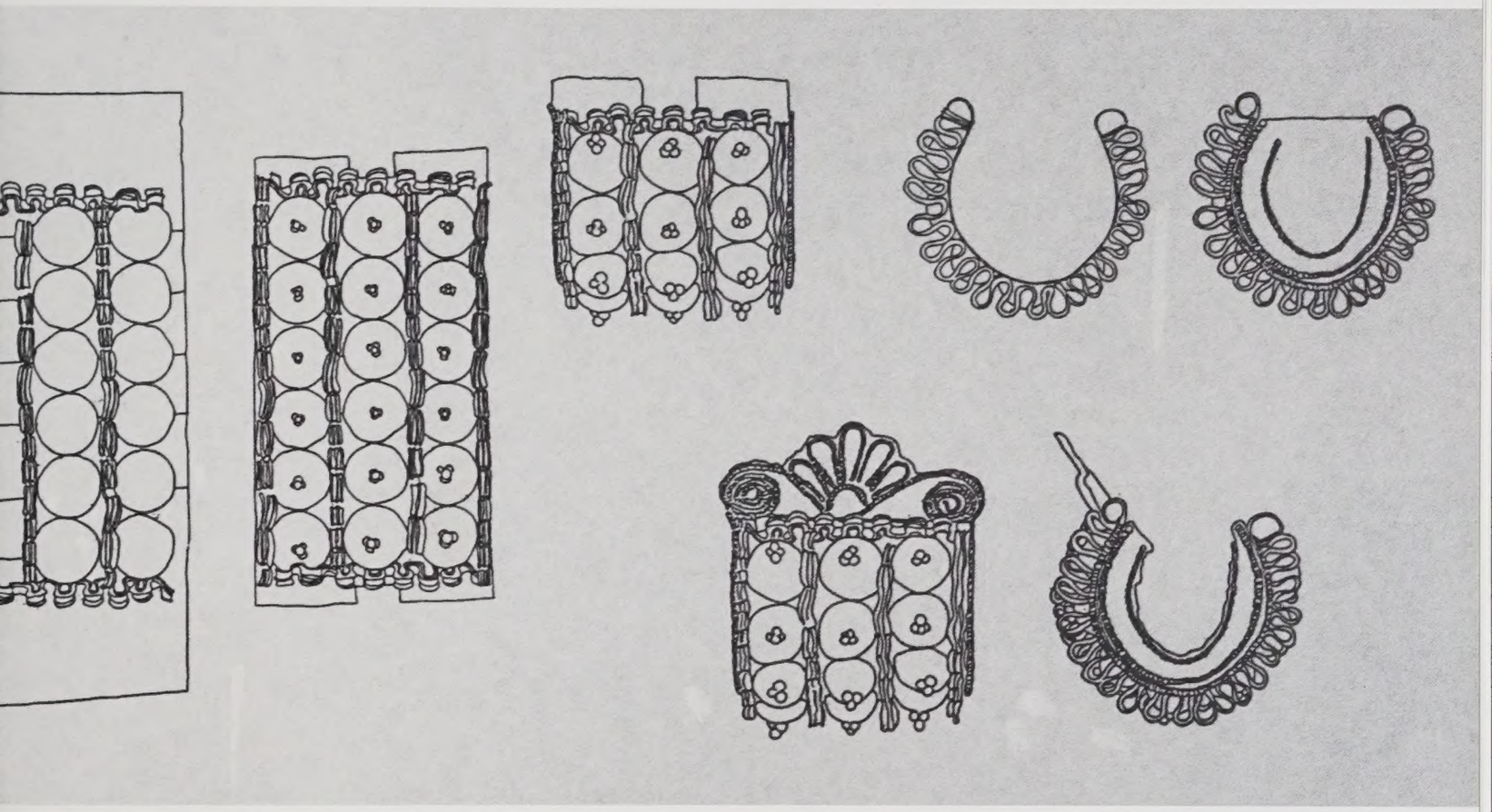
Having reproduced the sequences, materials, and conditions of the originals, Baines proceeds to comment on "the orthodoxy of the methodology." According to Baines, in order to apprehend an object, it is necessary to know three things: the substance, the process and the style. Since every maker inhabits his own time, with enough knowledge it is possible to place the object in its "correct" context. Certain alloys belong to a particular time, styles have been well documented, and processes are being understood by researchers like Baines himself, through the magic of the scanning electron microscope. A curator looking for evidence of authenticity, will, strictly speaking, find it in Baines' fabrications; but the curator will also find the confounding conceit of the red plastic shard or the entire red reflector. Baines seeks to prove that although an object may be historically correct, and produced according to ancient recipes, it may still be "wrong." His constructions are historically correct, however; hinges on one Islamic bracelet are wound in a coil. It is not enough to faithfully reproduce very old things, even very old things whose methods of fabrication had been lost for centuries.

Little known in the United States, Robert Baines has made a significant contribution to Australian jewelry, object-making, and international historical scholarship for over twenty years. A graduate of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in gold and silversmithing, Baines also holds a Master of Arts in classics and archaeology from Monash University. He has written and presented numerous scholarly papers on jewelry studies from deep antiquity through the Renaissance (5000 BCE-1600 CE), and received many fellowships and research grants as well. As a contemporary metalsmith he has enjoyed a great many awards, prizes, and solo exhibitions. Like many makers his interests are

varied, but his professional life seems divided between two complementary fields of inquiry: the truly historical and the contemporary with deep roots.

Each pursuit carries its own challenges and satisfactions, and Baines observes that there's a "different philosophy of working" in the historical context, and "there's no use coming with your own baggage." The material either will or won't respond and it can't be forced. There is an interrelatedness, but insofar as Baines is not interested in historicity per se, it seems easier to understand how the research informs the contemporary, than the other way round. Yet he insists the process is a two-way street, that knowing an alloy or a method of fabrication enables him to "read" an artifact more accurately. There remains a synergy between his involvement with ancient fabrication and his own creative work.

Baines' trip down the rabbit hole took the form of burrowing deeper and deeper into Etruscan and Greek gold work by means of the scanning electron microscope. At the dawn of the 21st century, when post-modernist narrative use of ready-mades appears to be nearly moribund, it doesn't seem possible to add anything really new to the use of found objects in contemporary jewelry. Baines's abilities as a scholar and a goldsmith leave him in a unique position to unleash the secrets of fabrication after 3000 years and annotate the design with late-20th century artifacts, be they faceted plastic light reflectors or powdercoat. Robert Baines confronts two taboos in contemporary art: skill and history. By returning to the apogee of gold work so long ago, he reminds us how critical they are. And as a maker himself, he gains an advantage over the antiquarian or the curator who remains an observer. He's not even very interested in the stylistic or sociological locus of the work. But the maker, now there's something timeless.■



above
Seqencial drawing

left
Scanning Electron Micrograph of Ear Ornament
Scan by Metropolitan Museum of Art
Baule earring – courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith, a writer, and the Chairperson of the Editorial Advisory Committee of Metalsmith.

Notes

1 Albers, Josef. *The Interaction of Color*. Yale University Press, revised edition, 1975. p1.
2 Production of catalogues was funded by the Australia Council.
3 This and all other unattributed quotes taken from conversation with the artist in May 2000.
4 Phillips, Clare. *JEWELRY From Antiquity to the Present*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1996. p 24.
5 Ibid.
6 Baines' catalogue *Bloodier Than Black* contains the text of an illustrated research paper on a pair of earrings believed to be from Madytos, Greece, including micrographs and the artist's drawings. Other research appears in papers of the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Research was conducted at the Metropolitan Musem of Art in New York in 1997 through a Senior Fulbright Study and more recently Andrew Mellon Senior Fellowship. Catalogues available in the US through Helen Drutt: Philadelphia, 1721 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

top
Sequoia Sempervirens, 2000
redwood bark, U.S. currency
$2\frac{5}{8} \times 4$"

bottom
Savior, 1996
wood, U.S. currency
1 x 6"

The Value of Wood and Nickels - Jewelry by Kathy Buszkiewicz

text by Kate Stassen

"...There exists within our society a group of people that not only believe that they can make meaning; but also that they can project meaning into the world through jewelry."[1]

Kathy Buszkiewicz makes jewelry about value -- how we perceive it, bestow it, confuse it, deny it. Drawing on ethnographic traditions, a proclivity for metaphor and juxtaposition, and a love of the environment, she creates subtle, subversive works which challenge our assumptions of worth. The permanent, the transient, and the relationship between them are employed to reveal the paradox shaping contemporary life.

In a historical and cross-cultural tradition, Buszkiewicz's work speaks of issues specific to her world, in this case "economic status, exorbitance, social waste, misplaced priorities, and the conservation of precious resources."[2] She asks us to distinguish what we desire from what we love, and consider origins, price, and sustainability. In a consumer culture manufacturing massive cravings for limited resources, Buszkiewicz focuses on the dangers of value determined independent of cost - particularly the hidden and the long-term.

"Americans have moved from a society of producers to one of consumers," wrote Gary S. Griffin in his 1996 introduction to the SIGNals exhibition. "To position oneself as a maker and to subsequently introduce making as a subject within a society of consumers is indeed reactionary but it is also undeniably meaningful. It is meaningful because it suggests that making is an important part of thinking and realization. It is significant because it disputes the elevation of mind over body. It is important because it suggests that labor is defined by production and that product is defined by physicality."[3]

Buszkiewicz's objects are about objects - why and from what they are made, what has been lost in their making, and if we traded wisely. Since childhood, she has been surrounded by antiques, war memorabilia, and bows and arrows. Although she wasn't terribly interested at the time, the sense of craft made its impression. Her father was a carpenter and she spent hours watching him build things. After he died, (Buszkiewicz was six), her mother opened an auction house as one means of supporting Buszkiewicz and her brother. Recycling was as much necessity as treasure hunt, and the young artist was enlisted in the ongoing search for collectibles.

During her days in parochial school - singing and reciting Latin - she developed an affinity for classification. She collected her mother's discarded coffee cans and filled them with carefully sorted colors of soil - red dirt, black dirt, sand - which she tried selling as different grades of ground coffee. Sales were bad, but Buszkiewicz enjoyed gathering and organizing.

Her first metalsmithing class came during her junior year at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. While many subjects came easily, metalsmithing impressed her as something out of the ordinary and especially difficult. The challenge, the tactility of the metal, and the hands-on nature of the field captured her interest. She majored in jewelry and metalsmithing with Leslie Leupp and received her B.S. in Fine Arts, Jewelry/Metalsmithing in 1975. In 1980, she completed graduate studies with Alma Eikerman at Indiana University and received an M.F.A. in Jewelry/Metalsmithing.

While interviewing for teaching positions, she applied for a job at the Shane Company setting diamonds. Buszkiewicz had never touched gold or diamonds - she knew nothing about setting them. Her portfolio was persuasive, however, and she worked there for three years before accepting a position as Professor of Jewelry and Metals at the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1983.

Buszkiewicz's early jewelry focused on choice, adaptability, and change. She also made small objects, choosing whichever format best served her intent. Rather than adornment, Buszkiewicz was concerned with jewelry's "multiple associations to humans and the impact it can have on an individual." Concern for the intimate relationship between wearer and maker inspired her to include options for her counterpart in each design. Brooches were double ended - each element had one or more pin stems which could be secured anywhere on the body. Primarily sculptural, her work was fabricated from a variety of materials including anodized aluminum, color core, formica, mixed metals, and sterling.

In 1990, Buszkiewicz received a Lilly Foundation grant - the first in a two-year series of synchronistic events which dramatically changed the focus of her jewelry. The grant enabled her to use gold for the first time since her commercial bench work in the early 1980s. Buszkiewicz wanted to make something unconventional but related to the metal's unique attributes. Juxtaposing gold with more transient materials created dichotomies which interested her, but she was hesitant to incorporate environmental elements in her work without specific reasons.

The following year, Buszkiewicz proposed and curated an ethnographic exhibition at the Cleveland Institute of Art, which ran concurrently with a retrospective of William Harper's jewelry. She intended "Ethnographic Jewelry: Ritual, Power, Prestige" to illustrate, among other things, the origins of much of the tribal imagery informing Harper's enamels. With little time to prepare, Buszkiewicz drew heavily on impressive private local collections. Unfortunately, many of the owners knew little about the origins or purposes of the 250 pieces - representing nearly every ethnographic culture that exists - which Buszkiewicz selected. The ensuing research consumed a year's time, and influenced her greatly as both educator and artist. The materials used by the exhibition's 200-plus jewelers and object makers were diverse, yet each piece spoke directly about the culture from which it came - who had made it, who would wear it, and what they valued.

In 1991, she and her husband won two roundtrip tickets to Indonesia. That October, they spent four weeks visiting Sulawesi, Lombok, Bali and Java. Her experiences there reversed her hesitation towards the use of temporal materials in her work, and initiated a long-term interest in the paradoxical relationship between permanence and transience. While contemporary U.S. culture often dismisses the impermanent as insignificant, Buszkiewicz links it to the spiritual, and the cyclical nature of life - topics less easily dismissed.

Naturally disposed towards reflection, Buszkiewicz does not rush her ideas. They evolve slowly, issuing forth when they do as thoughtfully considered, fully formed insights with concordant impact. The combined effects of Indonesia, the ethnographic exhibition, the Lilly grant, and the first of two Individual Artist Grants (1992 and 1994, from the Ohio Arts Council) emerged in the form of four brooches. *Commitment, Longevity, Security,* and *Wealth* were the incarnations of Buszkiewicz's long-gestating reflections on gold.

"Gold's historic reference as a noble, reverent metal and its familiarity as an acceptable material to use in jewelry elevates natural objects to the status of precious. The intent of using impermanent objects within the work seems paradoxical. They focus on contradictory thoughts - one ephemeral, the other perpetual. In our culture, transient is looked upon as being undesirable. But the transitory object relates to the spiritual and allows for the contemplation on other than the tangible product."

Like her earlier work, these brooches were about choice and change. But now, contradiction and duality brought tension to the previously serene. The relationship between ephemeral and perpetual became of primary importance. Nature, wealth, and value emerged as protagonists. Buszkiewicz mapped out connections and revealed choices which - consciously or not - were occurring daily and

which profoundly affected a delicate societal and ecological balance, in some cases irreversibly.

Longevity, 1992, ties a gold spiral to a delicate curl of shedding sycamore tree - joining the eternal cycle of death and rebirth with the temporality of life. *Security*, 1992 pits the safety of Home (symbolized by a shell) against Money (represented by a $100 bill) and stretches an asymmetrical safety net between them. *Commitment*, 1992 a symbol of Buszkiewicz's ceremonial marriage to the environment, links a gold wedding band on a thin, fifteen-inch gold chain to a butterfly-shaped wedge made from two pine cone scales.

Wealth, 1992, is about balance, and presents the viewer with a metaphorical scale. On one side, secured against black foam and sealed in a round, clear plastic container, used primarily for storing expensive gems, lie a single diamond and a gold nugget. In a second, identical plastic disc are multicolored forest, floral, and food seeds. Each disc is joined to the end of a brittle "wish" bone via a fine-gauge gold chain. Will the balance hold, or be destroyed with bone-breaking crunch? The wishbone is a welcome instrument of luck influencing a decision sure to need it.

Sticks and Stones, 1993, was the last piece Buszkiewicz made which involved options for the wearer. A diamond-shaped compartment holds a few dozen, half-inch sticks. The twigs are stand-ins for an absent gemstone, represented by a hollow oval piercing the center of the ring. Either way the ring is worn, its center is air. Four tiny levers with snap grooves allow the wearer to expose either the stick compartment or a flat, conventional gold surface engraved with tiny, twig-like marks.

It was important for Buszkiewicz to include real sticks rather than an image or representation of them. If her gold and wood ring is dug up a few hundred years from now and the fibrous element is missing, she is unfazed. Placing *Sticks and Stones* amongst the artifacts future archeologists will have to interpret - via assumption and educated guesswork - is an ingress to the mystery and paradox which accompany the mixing of transience and permanence.

In an effort to address the values of her own culture ever more directly, in 1993 Buszkiewicz set aside gold (the symbol of wealth) for money itself. "Gold elevates a piece to a revered social position, while the use of money is more straightforward - it has economic attachment to what culture prescribes as valuable. Money also confronts an individual with the meaning of their actions and spotlights their desires."

Ultimately it would take two years for Buszkiewicz to get permission from the Federal Reserve to use - and then sell - shredded U.S. currency. Picking up her haystack of chopped bills - at the Cleveland branch of the Federal Reserve - involved a long, specific set of rules which had to be followed exactly each time. The heavy bails measured four feet tall by two and one-half feet square, and she was allowed only one bail per visit.

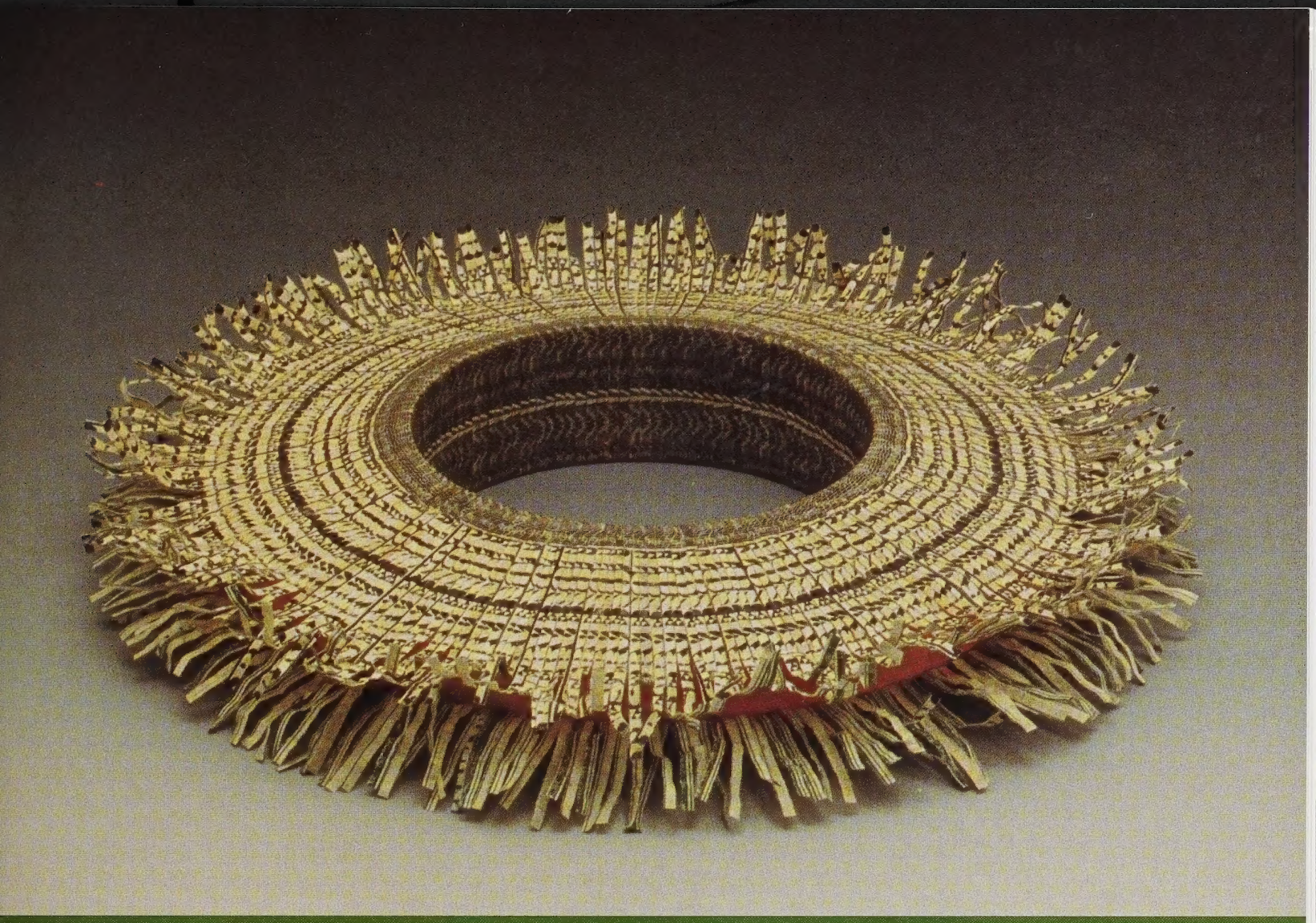
Tad Crawford's *The Secret Life of Money* helped refine Buszkiewicz's thoughts about the relationship between currency and value. "The reason that so many people worship money is because money, in its origins, was divine.... Money evolves as an aspect of fertility. When the riches of the hunt and the field were first offered back to the spirit world to ensure further renewal, there could be no doubt that this natural bounty was sacred. As cultures became more complex and specialized, this sacred bounty came to be traded outside of the sacrificial rituals binding human to god. It became a commodity, bartered at first and, later, either became money proper or was exchanged for money. So, inevitably, whatever the shape of money, it originated in the exchange between the human and spirit worlds."[4]

Social Security, 1993, was her first piece created from cash. A sensual curl of bark wraps around a two-inch bankroll. That year's gross national debt of $4,396,781,579,132.00 is stamped along a bottom sleeve made from copper (think pennies). *Social Security* perches on the shoulder like a flag pole, a fifty-dollar bill fluttering around its exterior. In a culture obsessed with consuming, a thick bankroll could be construed as a consoling source of self-validation. But much as bark can be stripped from a tree, exposing it to disease and death, wealth and flaunted riches offer limited security.

The fine line between healthy tree and dead commodity was reinforced for Buszkiewicz by a severe storm in the summer of 1994. Overnight, thousands of Cleveland's massive old trees were knocked down. The suddenly plentiful trunks and branches prompted a return to a larger, sculptural format, this time blending trees and cash. (Many sculptures and installations from this period were shown at the Wearley Studio Gallery and reviewed in *Metalsmith*, Spring 1996).

"I am intrigued with cultural perceptions regarding the worth of objects, ideas and the quality of life..." Buszkiewicz wrote at the time. "These works comment on the exaltation of nature, the true security and power of money, use of the natural material as commodity and the bestowment of value upon and simultaneously the annihilation of a natural resource. We attempt to acquire what we value. Working with "value" concepts and defining a kinship with nature brings meaningfulness within a distracted society."

RESERVE
STATES OF



spread: clockwise from top left
Wealth, 1992
14k, wish bone, diamond, 24k nugget, seeds, floral food
7 x 13"

Want Not, 1996
U.S. currency, wood, flower, petals
7/8 x 6 1/2"

Vanitati Sacrificium: Eternity, Fancy, and Macho, 2000
18k, 14k, U.S. currency, cubic zirconia
1 x 1"; 7/8 x 7/8 x 7/8"; 1 1/8 x 1 x 1"

Engagement Ring, 1994
cocobolo wood, 14k
1 x 3 x 4"

Social Security, 1993
bark, copper, U.S. currency
3 x 2 x 2"

Engagement Ring, 1994, is Buszkiewicz's response to clear cutting, the endless drone of saw mills, and carat-sized matrimony. She carved a solitaire of endangered Central American cocobolo wood (rescued from a trash bin at school) and set it in six gold prongs. The irony of crafting work - particularly an engagement ring - from decidedly transient materials reinforces Buszkiewicz's ongoing message. What do we desire? What do we love? What is the difference? How do we sustain what we value?

Weyerh 45 1/2 +9, 1994, named for Weyerhauser, the international forest products giant, lays out three neat bundles of bark and bills, illustrating the beginning, middle, and final stages of the commodity transformation. *Weyerh 36 1/2 –3*, uses the same metaphor for a lesser-valued stock in increasingly worthless states. In the first coin roll, the proportion of wood chips to quarters is fairly even, but this balance deteriorates in three rapid steps till the final plastic roll holds nothing but sawdust.

Bowl, 1994, was the first sculpture which demanded the sorting of shredded currency. Within each bail are at least three different denominations - ones, fives and twenties, for example - each of which has been cut lengthwise into sixteen or twenty pieces. There are, additionally, three variations on any given strip of currency - depending if it's cut dead center or shifts left or right. It takes half an hour for Buszkiewicz's eyes to acclimate, so she can distinguish a specific strip from among the 47 - 179 other possibilities. In *Bowl*, Kathy created a pattern using the same slice of ten-dollar bill throughout. To this she added Eucalyptus leaves, building from two seemingly worthless materials something of value. It took between 400 and 500 hours to construct.

Commodity, 1994, sandwiches shredded bills between two twenty-four inch, wooden slices of bread. A symbol of nourishment for body and spirit, as well as an important part of Catholic mass and communion, "bread" and "dough" both are also slang for money.

Beggar's Aroma, 1995, distinguishes needy from greedy - the destitute from the religious fanatics, the wealthy and the powerful begging for their own deceptive reasons. On the handle of the squat, tin-plated mug (an homage to her mother's love of coffee), Buszkiewicz has engraved, "Mister can you spare a dime?" Sprinkled in and around the cup are small, currency-covered, wooden coins with a dozen different messages including, "Trust," "God," "Treasury" and "Home."

In *Three Topiaries*, 1994, man's attempt to control nature fuses with the fable of money growing on trees. *Established Sentiment*, 1994 magnifies the thought. There is an elaborately scrolled, cast iron bench on which the viewer may recline and watch money sprouting on a nearby weeping willow. Lacking a clear connection between money and its sacred origins, contemporary America has become fascinated with overnight fortunes. With little interest in the "day job," daydreams of lottery-derived leisure take over.

What are the alternatives to consumer values Buszkiewicz would like accorded equal time? "There is the spiritual value of inventiveness, the value of crafting, the value of the wholeness of the world and balance; of respect for nature; value of a place for discards; a value for the process; value of history of objects; a value of time and beauty. . . . I see a lot of artists who are just taking materials and making something out of them without being really thoughtful about the baggage that's attached to that object or material. Our world is filled enough; we don't need more stuff - we need more thoughtful stuff."

The details of U.S. currency (words, scrolls, and foliage) are used to greatest effect in Buszkiewicz's bracelets. *Tender Revival*, 1995, is based on the brass and bronze anklets of the Ibo tribe from Nigeria. Measuring between 8" and 14" in diameter, the anklets were popular symbols of status but made walking especially difficult. Intentionally encumbering one's self with objects of wealth and rank resonated with Buszkiewicz, who created a modern American interpretation of the Ibo anklets. On closer inspection, the intricate patterning on one of her paired bracelets is made by repeating the phrase: "This Note is Legal Tender," and on the other: "For All Debts Public and Private."

Buszkiewicz's elaborate configurations are one of two primary methods used to draw us in and deliver her message. By cutting out the extraneous, and repeating a single, significant element a hundred times or more, she intrigues an audience already familiar with obsession and over-stimulation. Her conversely quiet alternative relocates a lone, familiar - even nondescript - element into a foreign, metaphorically loaded setting accentuating its singularity. Both approaches are effective, circumventing our defenses via humor and surprise.

"American humor was intricately tied to rebellion and social protest from its inception,"[5] wrote Mel Watkins, regarding the work of another American jeweler specializing in social commentary, Joyce Scott. Like Scott, Buszkiewicz's work sneaks up on us in the innocent guise of mild-mannered materials (brightly colored beads, or delicate, fluttery ikat patterns). Like Kathleen Browne, Keith Lewis and other meaning-motivated studio jewelers, Buszkiewicz seduces the viewer with virtuoso technique and soothing, sensuous materials. "Once the work has drawn the eye, it goes on to educate

and sometimes amuse and provoke."[6] Humor allows us - in an unsuspecting moment - to glimpse something we might never grasp otherwise.

The redemptive, sacred roots of money, as well as modern get-rich-quick fantasies, are referenced in *Savior*, 1996. The rounded edge of the lifesaver shaped bracelet reads, "In God We Trust," but the familiar green and white lettering links clearly to dollars, and makes us wonder which god is being endorsed. Buszkiewicz regards the hundreds of hours she labors - in service to her message - as a modern version of the offerings connecting human with spirit world.

Quercus, 1996 is Latin for "oak." It is the most common tree in the U.S. and Buszkiewicz considers it part of our collective national treasury. Using a foliage strip from the twenty-dollar bill, she repeats "U.S. Treasury" along the bracelet's outer edge. (While assigning value to national parks is a heated issue, this particular oak is worth exactly $10,680 in shredded bills.)

Using 250 twenty-dollar bills, Buszkiewicz clarifies America's throw-away temperament in her 1996 bracelet, *Disposability*. Along the interior she repeats "State of America"; along the exterior and upside down, "Reserve Not." The fringe of another bracelet, *Want Not*, 1996 is also made from the latter two words. Vibrant orange flower petals are protected in a center crevice. But petals are of the temporal world, and their whitening tips reveal their impending demise. By contrasting fading flowers with American currency - a material so familiar as to be nearly invisible, and in this case, so shredded as to be nearly unrecognizable - Buszkiewicz continues questioning, prodding, and playing with material hierarchy.

Scraps of twelve different types of wood rescued from student trash piles, were transformed into *Graded*, 1997. In a black velvet case, a small gold plate beneath each (ebony, cherry, cocobolo, oak, purpleheart, zebrawood, padauk, wenge, maple, poplar, walnut, and mahogany) rates the gem-shaped sample on a scale from common to endangered: SI, VS, VVS, VS1, VS2, et cetera.

In her latest work, Buszkiewicz has returned to gold. Contradictions being an inherent part of value systems, Buszkiewicz finds the metal an excellent protagonist. A common symbol of the eternal when juxtaposed with the temporal, in reality, gold is neither indestructible nor unnatural itself.

In her new trio of rings, Buszkiewicz sets tiny, wrapped discs of currency in gold, much as diamonds are set in commercial jewelry designs. The three rings in the *Vanitati Sacrificium*, (Latin for "Sacrifice for Vanity") series are subtitled: *Macho, Fancy* and *Eternity*. As twigs stood in for an absent gemstone in *Sticks and Stones*, these caplets of cash have replaced diamonds. What, exactly, is the difference? What does the alchemical mingling of money, gold, and invisible but inferred carats produce?

In the latest synchronistic turn of events, chopped currency has become more rare than diamonds, and more temporal than twigs. The Cleveland Federal Reserve is no longer shredding but mulching defunct bills - the last branch in the nation to do so. The bails at Buszkiewicz's home are the final three available to her. So, *Sempervirens* (Latin for coastal sequoia), a redwood bark incarnation of the "Reserve Not" bracelets, will be among the final cut-currency constructions.

Shredded dollars have served Buszkiewicz well but it is, after all, her multi-layered juxtapositions rather than any single material which give her work its impact. Her messages surface daily due to the common materials with which she chooses to make meaning. The thought behind the physical object has always been her primary concern. Each dollar bill, each pine cone or strip of bark references our choice. How we assign worth - why we value and specifically what we value - reflects not only who we are, but our chances for survival. Meaning matters; materials, time and labor are Buszkiewicz's tools in its service, and offerings in the trade between human and spirit worlds.

"To arrange objects, transform materials, fabricate forms, or to sort and selectively fashion strips of shredded currency in an order while creating beautiful patterns and textures, fulfills my need to make. Examining contemporary issues through the artwork, while posing relevant questions for the viewer, satisfies my need to contribute thoughtfully to our society."

*

"Perhaps indicators, possibly acts, or in some cases commands, signals make things known to us, things that in some cases incite action."[7] ■

Kate Stassen is a writer from San Francisco, California.

Notes

1 Gary S. Griffin, *SIGNals: Late Twentieth-century American Jewelry*, brochure, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1996
2 This and all other unattributed quotes courtesy of Kathy Buskiewicz, in written or verbal communication with the author.
3 Griffin, *SIGNals*.
4 Tad Crawford, *The Secret Life of Money: How Money Can be Food for the Soul*, Allworth Press, 1996.
5 Mel Watkins, Joyce J. Scott: The Artist and Performer as Humorous," in *Joyce J. Scott: Kickin' It with the Old Masters* catalogue; The Baltimore Museum of Art/Maryland Institute, College of Art, 2000.
6 Barbara Tannenbaum, *Her Story/His Story: Jewelry and Sculpture* by Kathleen Browne & Keith Lewis brochure, Akron Art Museum, 1994.
7 Gary S. Griffin, *SIGNals*

OBSERVATIONS

the work of JULIA TURNER

Much "found object" jewelry taps into a kind of simple-minded pastiche of fetish oriented, pseudo-primitive traditions. Julia Turner has avoided such easy solutions by incorporating the flotsam of everyday life into exquisitely crafted rings and bracelets.

Her elegant framing of "*Super Balls*," drain stoppers, scrub brushes, and pecan shells, with sterling silver, subverts an easy irony and archness. Our double-take is almost inadvertent. A bemused pleasure, even an enthusiastic "neat" may escape our lips. Unlike other strategies of appropriation, Turner also does not seem to have a social or political agenda. We are not confronted with objects of domestic labor in women's jewelry, nor do we encounter her astro turf in the form of a macho Super Bowl ring. Instead, the material variety and excess of modern culture, quietly taps our shoulder, as it were, and says "Hey, what about me?"

above
Rings, 1999
sterling, rubber superballs
$1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$"

facing page:
clockwise from top left
Ring (1 inch = 1 yard), 1999
sterling, astroturf
$1\frac{3}{8} \times 1\frac{3}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$"

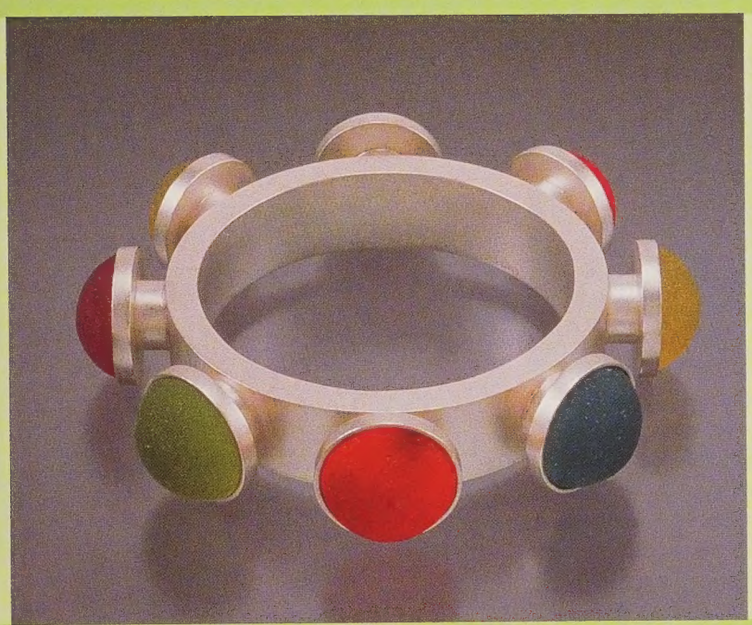
Potty Ring, 1999
sterling, rubber drain stopper, rubber gasket, plastic scrub brush
$2 \times 1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$"

Ring, 1999
sterling, carved and painted pecan shell
$1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$"

Ring , 1999
sterling, carved and painted wood, acrylic fibers
$2 \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$"

Monster Truck Ring, 1999
sterling, cubic zirconium, toy truck tires
$1\frac{1}{4} \times 1 \times 1/2$"

Bracelet, 1999
sterling, rubber superballs
$4\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 1$"



BRIDGING THE MILLENNIUM

MONTEREY BAY METAL ARTS SHOW
PACIFIC GROVE ART CENTER
PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA
FEBRUARY 18 – MARCH 24, 2000

text by **REBECCA RAMOS**

REVIEWS

"Bridging the Millennium: Ending One Century – Beginning Another" was an exhibit of recent work created by members of the Monterey Bay Metal Arts Guild. The exhibit served as a catalyst to examine and contemplate the drive to create and the commitment of artists to their craft.

The turn of the century forms a psychological threshold, and many artists are taking the opportunity to examine which aspects of their personal endeavors they will carry over into the new century. In this process of reflection, evaluation, and inspiration, the solitary pursuit of the artist can be stimulated by the input of others. Two effective forums for dialogue and the exchange of ideas are a coming together of artists who share similar interests and an exhibition. The Monterey Bay Metal Arts Guild has effectively provided just those opportunities. In "Bridging the Millennium" the participating artists have capitalized on their strengths and aesthetic concerns. And there is ample evidence that they will continue to draw on these sources.

The exhibition was designed with a sophisticated balance that honored the work of the artists. Clean and simple display cases and an uncluttered, well-choreographed traffic pattern, created an overall impression of professionalism and provided an optimal environment for viewing the work.

The range of sensibilities present exhibited a high caliber of involvement with the artistic process and a strong development of individual visual vocabularies. The exhibit provoked viewers to contemplate the fascination held by artist working in metals.

The vibrant enamel brooches by Carol Holaday, the elegant arrangement of form and color in the pieces by Gloria Shannon, and the refined sense of surface detail and sophisticated combinations of visual and actual textures in the work of Darlene Becker are memorable moments in this show. They serve as formal explorations into the elements of art which celebrate color and form, line and pattern. Birgit Kupke-Peyla complements this group with her dynamic use of asymmetrical balance in the compositions of her earrings and her *Teeter Totter* neckpiece.

There is an element of humor and whimsy in the exhibit created by a shared approach to animating utilitarian forms. Roger Edberg's *Conceptuary Teapot*, and Theresa Lovering-Brown's salad server sets, *Foundations 1 – 6*, and *Open House #1* letter openers, express a joyful connection to functional objects within the metalsmithing tradition. Rings by Rose Sellery, all entitled *Play Thing Ring*, and offered in small, medium, and large, illustrate that items of body adornment do not escape this humorous treatment.

Personal interpretation and an examination of the self-referential in art are exemplified in the work of Hiro Sugina. *Insight* is a lapel ornament that incorporates a pair of sunglasses as its main element. With a faceted aquamarine stone attached to the center of each lens, this piece becomes a commentary on the interconnection between object, vision, and perception: the three primary components of interpretations for all artists. With this piece viewers entertain the perennial questions: what is function, what is form, what is the purpose of investigation, and how is individual voice created in the arts. This lapel ornament is a fetishized eyepiece, a commentary on sight and vision. Its title completes the reference to observation as an interior experience, and an act of reflection..

The Monterey Bay Metal Arts Guild is comprised of a group of artists with a wide range

above
Rose Sellery
Essential Element For A Condom Nation
sterling silver, fine silver, sodalite donut, mica, condom
2 x 2 x .75"

right
Katie Enewold
Domino Angel
sterling silver, domino, brass, found objects
1.5 x .5 x .5"

of experience, from novice to professional, from student to teacher. Each artist is in the process of living a continuum with the medium. Ties to the traditional crafts of the metalsmith are realized through the design and fabrication of functional objects and jewelry.

As artists we are all links between the past and the future. We synthesize through our current experiences the technological and conceptual developments of the past, and create new works, which speak to our contemporary concerns. We interpret our ideas and perceptions through a visual language, creating physical objects, an undeniable human impulse. With this the question is posed again, in this new cycle that the millennium brings, what shall we carry over into our new creative endeavors.

Rebecca Ramos is a lecturer at Monterey Peninsula College and UC Santa Cruz.

CORNELIA PARKER
THE INSTITUE OF CONTEMPORARY ART BOSTON, MASSCHUSETTS

text by **HEATHER WHITE**

above
Cornelia Parker
Thirty Pieces of Silver, 1988-89
work in progress

above right
Cornelia Parker
Thirty Pieces of Silver, 1988-89
steamrolled silver plate, metal wire
dimensions variable
Photograph by Suara Welitof

British artist Cornelia Parker is no metalsmith, as a recent exhibition at the I.C.A. in Boston proves. For example, *Three Fathoms in a Thimble*, 1997, is a silver thimble melted down and drawn into thread. Sandwiched between glass, an ironic transformation takes place: the thimble itself is threaded through a needle. A similar piece is *Measuring Liberty with a Dollar*, 1997. Here the artist drew a silver dollar into a length of wire the exact height of the Statue of Liberty. It is a mere coil of silver wire, a hackneyed sight in any smith's studio, yet in this context it becomes a clever comparison between the miniature and gigantic.

Parker asks us to trust her, that we believe the object's stated origin, otherwise the pieces will not work. Parker's strategy is this: she takes mundane objects that have values in one context, and transforms these objects into new ones forcing them to acquire a new set of values. In so doing she places the old and new in opposition with literal and poetic implications.

Parker's work also attacks a characteristic hand-made object fetish of metalsmiths. *Twenty Years of Tarnish (Wedding Presents)*, 1996, is a set of silver plated goblets that she found. Though she did not hand craft them herself, she assigned them a meaning. They are a shiny steel gray color with a history of fingerprints decorating their surface. They are covered in the exact thing that is the bane of sterling silver: tarnish. Tarnish in this case becomes a sad meditation on marriage. She pursues this motif in her "tarnish drawings" entitled *Stolen Thunder*, 1997-99. In one case she rubbed a cloth over King Henry VIII's armor, in another, over Charles Dickens' knife. The cloths are then mounted and framed, taking on the air of ethereal gesture drawings. The history of the rubbed items clearly give these works value, but the finished pieces are disconcertingly neutral.

Metalsmiths rarely destroy their work in order to create a finished piece. Parker, on the other hand, has no problem with destruction in the creative process. A striking photograph shows a steamroller about to flatten a road lined with silver articles, part of the documentation in her installation *Thirty Pieces of Silver 1988*. Parker suspended thirty silver discs made from the mangled chalices, cutlery, loving cups, serving trays, and, even, a trombone. Each silvery mass hovers at mid-calf level, the objects which comprise the floating disks are still recognizable. Thousands of vertical wires connected to the objects create an ephemeral density. The installation, both absurd and beautiful, reveals many layers of betrayal, as Parker's steamroller denies these objects of their function and the class pretensions that accompany them. Furthermore, the objects are not genuine, merely plated, reinforcing the biblical reference of the title -- the kiss of Judas.

Though not all of Parker's works speak to the field of metals, there are unexpected delights to be found in an "outsider" pitching a tent in our stomping ground.

Heather White is a metalsmith and professor of metals at the Massachusetts College of Art.

ATTITUDE AND ACTION: NORTH AMERICAN FIGURATIVE JEWELRY

THE ATRIUM GALLERY, UCE,
SCHOOL OF JEWELLERY;
BIRMINGHAM, UK,
JULY 10 – AUGUST 4, 2000
THE JEWELLERY GALLERY, DESIGNYARD
DUBLIN, IRELAND,
SEPTEMBER 7 – OCTOBER 21, 2001

text by **YVONNE KULAGOWSKI**

Moving around the exhibition one was humbled by the generosity of the work, not in monetary terms but in the honesty, inspiration, and excitement that was evident in the seventy-three pieces made by seventy-five makers. This freedom in subject choice and wealth of narrative contrasts with the European arts and crafts theories of the early 1900s along with the teaching of a vast historical background to create jewellery with materials that are inherently precious. America is a young country with no major decorative art collections in its museums, something that we in Europe take for granted. Not until after the Second World War did the teaching of craft subjects become established in order to occupy the vast numbers of demobilized GI's. Schools were set-up to teach crafts with amazing results - American craftwork had been born.

In conceiving this show Gail M. Brown's motivation was to introduce North American figurative work to a European audience with little, perhaps no previous historical or contemporary knowledge or indeed interest. Her passion is to share and celebrate the many diverse ways these artists respond to the human body.

European jewelers tend to take one idea and exploit it as much as possible yielding almost endless possibilities. In much of Wendy Ramshaw's work themes, materials, and scale change but the piece of jewelry remains within the context of a sequence of rings displayed on a lathe-turned stand. Dyed and anodized aluminum, metal and process influence Jane Adam's work, exploring form and surface decoration. She has traveled from very elaborate 1980's pieces to her current abstract, almost painterly approach of today.

On the other side of the Atlantic jewelers seldom iterate, being influenced more by personal matters and/or ambient influences. Kit Carson's intriguing *Long Live the Wild, Wild West* brooch of a Stetson wearing, guitar playing, skeleton, with delightful engraving and concise selection of "icons" was portrayed with wit and individuality. Whereas Elizabeth Morgan Chenoweth's *No Daddy* brooch depicts the horror of childhood sex abuse in such a courageous way that the piece itself was disturbing. Her self-revelation does not try to hide anything, the piece is resonated to tell a story, her image is translated into jewellery.

If You Sit Still You Can Take Off the Mask by Marcia A. Macdonald and *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Shona Rae are sensitive pieces with personal interpretations, beautifully executed. Both provoke the onlooker to question - why is Macdonald's figure shackled, what is the significance of the penis/dummy and what on earth is the dog doing to the ankle on Rae's piece?

Narrative can rapidly become political with personal experiences adding to powerful content as in *Salt Lick (Unlikely Self-Portrait as Porn Star)* by Keith Lewis. This piece is all about self-identity, the fact that Lewis is gay and that it shows his and society's anxiety about AIDS. It exudes Lewis's confidence as a maker and is perfectly executed showing that he is able to be open about his ego, wit and humour. Drawing attention to gender issues Linda Threadgill's *The Nature of Ornament* displays a stylized female figure in a hoop skirt, the 'body' escapes from the skirt asserting itself to be worn as a pendant leaving behind the trappings and responsibilities that are associated with being a woman. Due to its small arm hole the *Cinderella Bracelet* by Harriete Estel Berman is deliberately unwearable. Constructed out of biscuit tins portraying Disney's heroine, this piece toys with all the idealized myths of womanhood - image, size, devotion, and tradition.

Exhibited alongside *The Mother Goddess* by Robert Ebendorf, a twenty-five-year practitioner, is *Embrace* by Melanie R. Bilenker, a recent Bachelor of Fine Arts, from the University of the Arts, at twenty-one, the youngest maker in the show. These sensitive pieces sit in harmony together showing that art is ageless.

This show represents an exploration through a subject that will never loose its fascination using a wide range of techniques and materials to create inspirational work. Many issues have been challenged, from very personal to playful, tragic to frivolous, American jewelers doing what they do so well -- celebrating themselves and their lives. The feedback from this exhibition was enthusiastic, jewellers and collectors alike were thrilled at having the opportunity to view it, it breathes new life into the subject matter and starts a dialogue with a new audience.

Yvonne Kulagowski studied jewelry and silversmithing at Dundee College of Art, Scotland, UK. She ran a contemporary jewelry business for ten years and is currently lecturing at various UK art colleges. She writes and is the Jewelry and Silversmithing Manager at the Contemporary Applied Arts gallery in London.

above left
Shona Rae
The Emperor's New Clothes
sterling, 10k, 14k, garnets

below
Harriete Estel Berman
Cinderella Bracelet
preprinted steel containers from recycled tin, plastic core

LILY YUNG: RAINBOW CATCHER: RECENT JEWELLERY

PRIME GALLERY
TORONTO, CANADA
MAY 4-27, 2000

text by **BARBARA ISHERWOOD**

This exhibition showcased several streams of recent work by artist Lily Yung. Working with metal wire and beads, Yung uses a variety of labour-intensive techniques to create necklaces, pendants, chokers, rings, and bracelets that range in mood from sprightly to solemn. Four pieces from her *Pharaoh's Dream* series, seen last year in a one-person show at the Art Gallery of Mississauga, were inspired by the jewellery of ancient Egypt, and are as awe-inspiring as their majestic titles suggest — Yung has pushed the possibilities of her techniques to unexpected places. *Pharaoh's 2nd Dream: Splendour in the Sand* is comprised of row upon row of glass beads in royal blue, turquoise blue, and blood red, strung on twisted brass wire to form a sculpted, undulating collar of regal proportions. In *Pharaoh's 5th Dream: Homage to Re*, a beaded hexagonal unit adds a clever finishing touch to the end of a fastening device. It is this attention to detail, coupled with Yung's design sensibility, and her singular artistic vision, that sets her work apart from run-of-the-mill bead and wire jewellery.

The other works in the show were characterized by the same passion for creative order that is evident in the *Pharaoh's Dream* series. *Choker With Single Band of Green Beads* is one of a group in which steel or coated copper wire in various colours is woven into rounded forms that are accented by beads. While the overall aesthetic is an elegant minimalism, close inspection reveals structures of intricate pattern.

In the third vein of work on view, wire is the hidden support for jewellery pieces comprised of loops and bursts of vibrantly coloured beads. Especially eye catching were a festive necklace featuring circles of translucent beads that shifted through the colour spectrum, and a collar of scarlet beads, strung to resemble coral. These pieces evoke visions of little girls making necklaces on a bright summer's day. Yet like their stately ancestors in the *Pharaoh's Dream* series, they are the result of a highly sophisticated approach to simple materials. The press release for the exhibition points to Yung's background in Immunology as a source of her affinity for organic pattern. While this is an interesting tidbit of information, the fact that her work can be appreciated without knowledge of her technique or background is testament to the universality of its appeal.

Barbara Isherwood is a frequent contributor to *Metalsmith*. She lives in Toronto, Canada.

above left
Lily Yung
Pharaoh's 2nd Dream: Splendour in the Sand
glass beads, brass wire

left
Lily Yung
(Untitled necklace)
scarlet beads

above right
Patty Cokus
Untitled Brooch
glass, silver, salt, pepper
2 x 1"

MILESTONES

SEINNA GALLERY
LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 6 – JUNE 30, 2000

text by **VELETA VANCZA**

The Sienna Gallery opened its doors in 1999 and has exhibited nationally and internationally recognized artists with its primary focus on jewelry objects. In an effort to recognize artists from its home state of Massachusetts, Sienna hosted "Milestones," an invitational featuring thirteen artists living and working in Massachusetts. The artists were asked to create objects utilizing something found within one mile of their home to create the pieces in the exhibition. The experience of the artists invited varied from those with a national reputation such as Joe Wood, to up-and-coming artists such as Patty Cokus and Sarah Kate Burgess.

Some of the artists such as Claire Sanford used objects from their homes, gardens, and the natural landscape to create a series of simple, poetic brooches. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the exhibition was to see how artists, such as Efharis Alepedis, took the opportunity to abandon their familiar working methods to create work which differed from their usual style and processes. Alepedis incorporated disposable foam earplugs to create playful and imaginative jewelry utilizing objects coming directly from the artist's studio. In *Club Earrings* she uses the earplug as the mechanism, stylishly plugging the ears of the wearer.

While some artists created predictable "found object" jewelry that one would expect to find in such an exhibition, others such as Deborah Krupenia, Alyssa Dee Krauss, and Deb Todd Wheeler took the concept to a refreshing level.

Krupenia created two brooches based upon the book *Ceremonial Time* by John Hansen Mitchell, depicting aerial views of one square mile in Massachusetts.

Alyssa Dee Krauss also drew upon literary

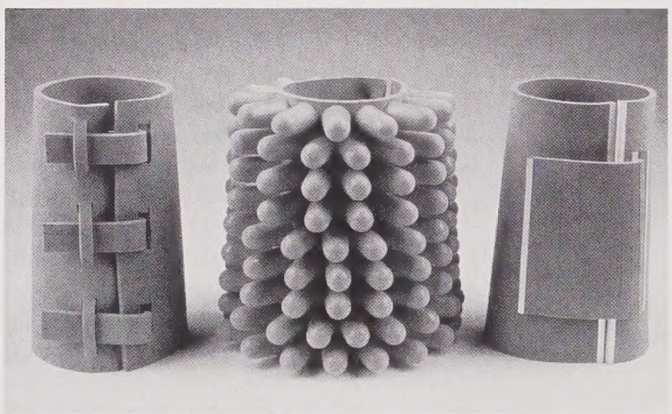
references to create perhaps the most "impressionable" jewelry in the exhibition. Krauss created a series of jewelry entitled *Amethyst Remembrance*. Based on a poem written by Emily Dickinson, the works play off of the memory of the artist, who lived in Leeds, Massachusetts, as Krauss does. The pieces are designed to leave an impression, literally, on the wearer. The ring and earrings leave an indentation of a faceted stone on the skin, which is only noticeable once the piece has been removed. One ponders whether the memories of objects are more precious than the objects themselves. The brooch is also worn underneath the clothes, situating its value more on memory than on ostentatious display.

Deb Todd Wheeler's *A is for Acorn* series employs a computer application which I haven't seen used in the same manner previously. Wheeler uses the 3-D rendering program "Form Z" to create a 2-dimensional, box-like pattern to recreate an acorn which she found in her yard. Rather than use the computer as a means to an end, Wheeler uses it as a tool to recreate a flat pattern, which was then etched into copper and constructed by hand.

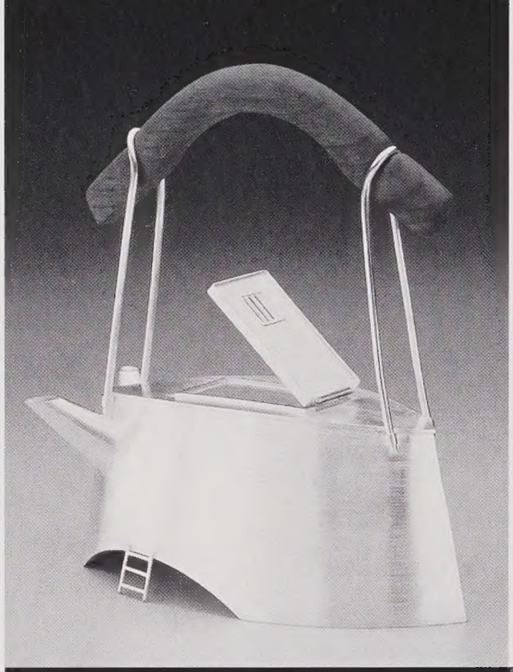
Some of these patterns were made into pendants and others were displayed within a framework, documenting the process of genesis and growth through photos of the tree from which the acorn fell. Additionally visual documentation of the computer process, as well as the pattern used to create the "virtual" acorn was included.

The exhibition was successful in its exhibition of the diversity of metalwork being created throughout Massachusetts. It was thoughtfully displayed with artist statements as well as easily accessible artists' resumes for those interested.

Veleta Vancza is student of metalsmithing at SUNY New Paltz.



above
Efharis Alepedis
3 Cuffs
foam, silver, earplugs



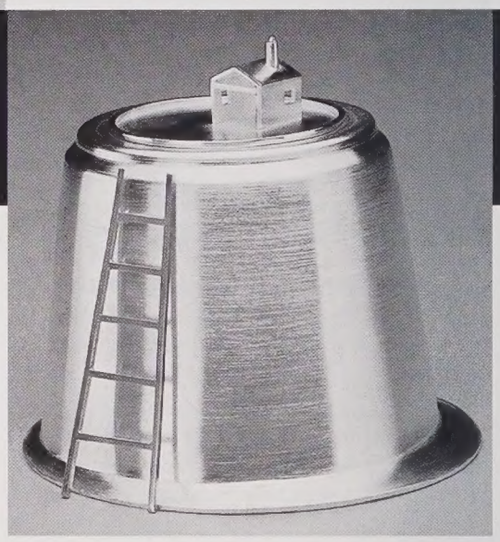
SADIE WANG
YAW GALLERY
BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN
MAY 5 – 27, 2000
text by **JENNIFER COPPEL**

Sadie Wang created twelve pieces that are linked by whimsical fairytale references, generous self-expression, and serious self-reflection. The work describes a sensitive personal journey, but it does not exclude the viewers. Much of the work requires handling to comprehend its entire meaning. Through this interaction, the objects beckon participants to listen to the narrative, learn from it, and add their own experience to the conversation. Wang's flawless craftsmanship allows viewers to focus on the story and enables them to appreciate her forms and subtle details.

Architectural structures set the stage for her narration. Most of the containers are based on castles, towers, fortresses, and silos. Brick patterns, barred windows, and prison like doors appear in several pieces, creating a feeling of being trapped or locked away. Sometimes possible avenues of escape are presented in the form of ladders, chimneys, and operable doors. All of the pieces convey a feeling of solitude, suggesting that she has created these walls and only she can free herself from their confines. This feeling is strongest is her silos, as one they recall abandoned towers in the middle of a vast open fields.

Relationships in flux is a complicated sub-theme of some of her pieces. Pairing, the heart symbol, and allusions to sex suggest the presence of another character underlying her thoughts and motivations. Her mixed emotions towards this character are expressed through several images, especially the hinged, swaying heart that dangles inside a small home. Further, in one pair of castles, *A Story and A Memory*, a sword appears stuck in the lid. This is an obvious reference to Excaliber, a symbol of fate and destiny. However, the sword may also portray a puncture or a severing of the relationship, or perhaps to its memory. Again, the simplicity and solemnity of the piece reinforces the suggestion that only she can resolve these mixed emotions.

Her titles further reiterate these themes. For example, *Solitary Confinement* is a small cube with multiple windows on all sides. Its entrances and exits lead you to nowhere. Most of her containers are functional; they open, pour, or hold things. Therefore, this cube's lack of purpose is psychologically unsettling but undeniable curious and attractive. *Trapped, A Company Of Two* is a double spouted teapot with a prison door and a side ladder that does not reach the entrance. *Home is Where the Heart Belongs* is a larger, swimming pool-like,



container with a ladder that allows one to jump into the pool but not get out. The knob on the lid is a small house with a swaying heart. Through their chimney and smokestack, the containers, such as *Dwell*, allude to both a residence and mental rumination.

I have followed Wang's work for several years and have seen it change and mature. These new objects "contain" sophisticated messages and parade the craftswoman's ability to create beautiful metal objects. Most importantly, she has found her voice and created a language to introduce personal, thought provoking ideas in a captivating fashion. I am anxious to see her next body of work, to delve further into her imagination and sub-conscience, and to discover new regions of my own.

Jennifer Coppel is a graduate student in metalsmithing at the Cranbrook Academy of Art.

above left
Sadie Wang
Trapped, A Company of Two
Photograph by R. H. Hensleigh

above right
Sadie Wang
Home is Where the Heart Belongs
Photograph by R. H. Hensleigh

SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICAN GOLDSMITHS

The Organization for Jewelers, Designers and Metalsmiths

Arline Fisch Awarded Honorary Membership in the Society of North American Goldsmiths

Metalsmith, Professor and outspoken advocate Arline Fisch received SNAG's highest award of honor during the 2000 SNAG conference in Boston. Arline has been one of SNAG's great benefactors. She was a founding member of SNAG, and served as its President from 1982-1985. She has served as Director of the World Craft Council, a Member of the Board of the American Craft Council and was elected as a Fellow of the A.C.C. Arline has taught metalsmithing for more than thirty-nine years. She is the author of the much-referenced text, Textile Techniques in Metal.

Arline's creative work is found in the Vatican Museum, The Victoria & Albert Museum, The National Museum of Modern Art in Japan, The American Craft Museum and the Renwick Gallery. Recently her distinguished career was celebrated in a retrospective exhibition at the San Diego Historical Society and was accompanied by a catalogue entitled "Elegant Fantasy." Among her innumerable awards are four Fulbright Grants, a Lifetime Achievement in the Crafts Award from the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and being named a Living Treasure of California by the California State Assembly.

2001 SNAG Conference in Richmond, Virginia February 28- March 3, 2001

The keynote speaker for this year's conference is the distinguished Clare Phillips, curator of the silver, metalwork and jewellery collection at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and author of the recent book *Jewels and Jewellery*. Additional presenters include John Behringer, Dansk Design International, "The Artist in Industry," Linda Darty, "Contemporary Enameling," Ursula Ilse-Neuman, American Crafts Museum, Phil Poirier, "Raising in the Deep Draw Press: Developing Volume and Form," Christopher Cart, "Platinum Casting Techniques: You're Only As Good As Your Last Cast," Robert Ebendorf, and Tacey Rosolowski, "The Order of Adornment"; both Jamie Bennett and Gary Griffin will also give lectures on their metalwork.

Several exhibitions will coincide with the conference including "Zierat: International Contemporary Jewelry Invitational," containing exceptional pieces of contemporary art jewelry by thirty artists from the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Educators' Dialogue

Sharon Church will lead a February 28, 2001, pre-conference Educators' Dialogue addressing a list of issues confronting jewelry and metals educators in the field today with an eye to the future. Also during the conference, SNAG will host the Second Annual "Conference Connections Room" for students of all levels to meet with representatives of educational institutions from across the country, ranging from summer workshops to graduate schools.

SNAG Minority Outreach Grants for Secondary Schools

In order to create opportunities for minority high school students to learn about jewelry and metalsmithing, SNAG has launched a new dual grant program. Beginning in 2001, SNAG will provide simultaneous grants to a SNAG presenter of a 6-8 hour workshop and to the school for the purchase of tools and materials for the workshop, each in an amount up to $375. The grant application deadline is March 15, 2001.

top Arline Fisch, photograph by Cary Okzaki
middle SNAG 2000 conference in Boston, March 8-11. The conference's book-signing event featured Alan Revere, Arline Fisch and Charles Lewton-Brain, among many others.
bottom Tom Joyce a conference presenter, spoke on The Blacksmith's Art from Africa. Photographs by Frank Kavanaugh

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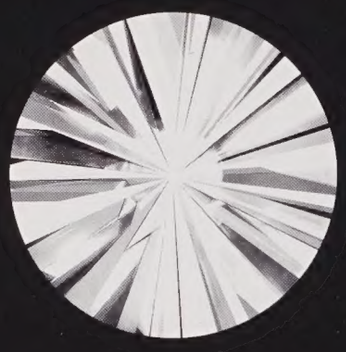

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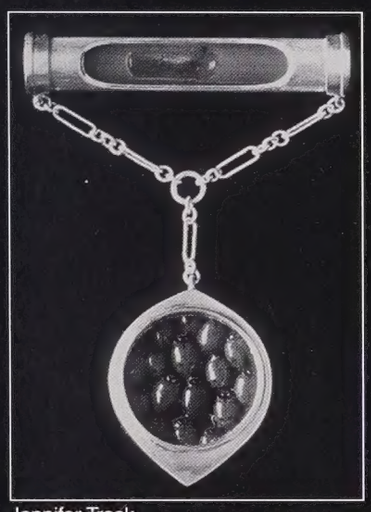

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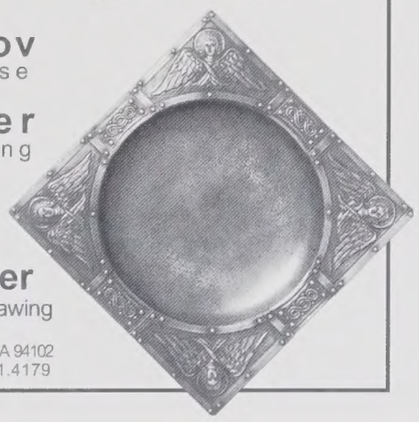

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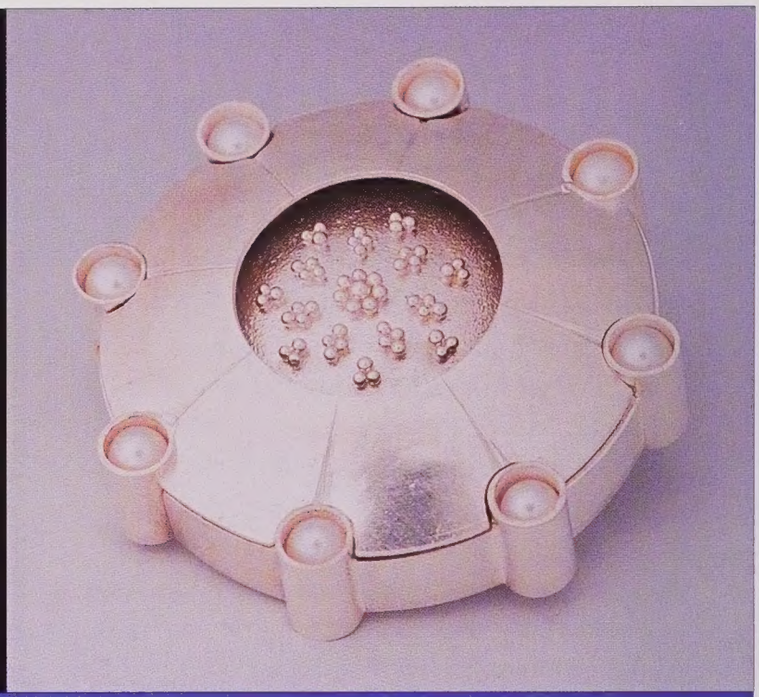

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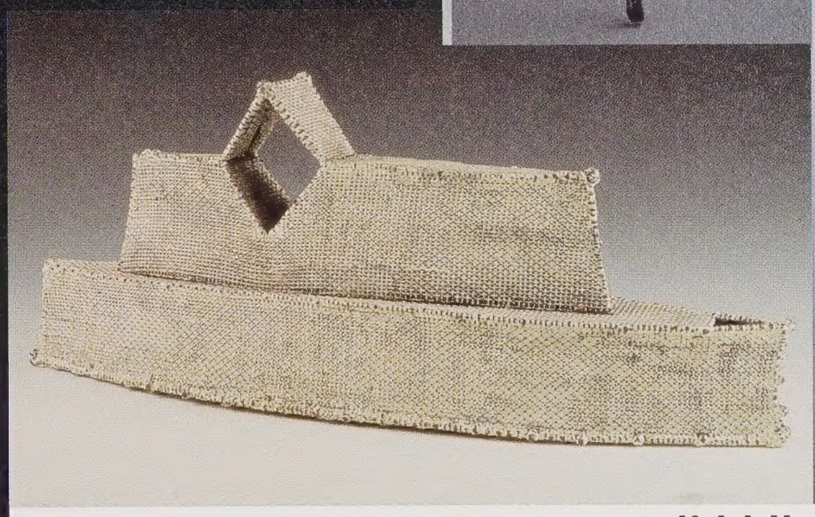

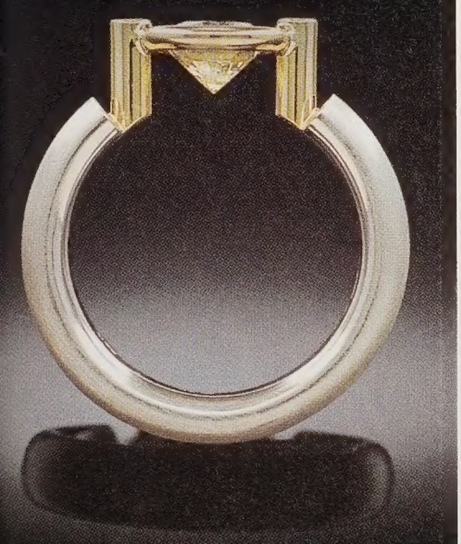

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opposite page, clockwise from top

Chris Y. Smith
Balance Is Too Strenuous (brooch)
silver
4 1/2 x 5 x 1"

Biba Schutz
Circum Pendant, 1996
oxidized bronze and copper, sterling, fine silver
4 1/3 x 1 1/3 x 1 1/3"

(*Metalsmith* Magazine)
Eun-Mee Chung
Passion (brooch), 1999
18k, sterling, diamond, paper
5 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2"

Billie Jean Theide
Butte #EF-8 (teapot), 1997
bronze, electroformed copper, enamel, patina
4 1/4 x 10 x 12 1/2"
photograph by Billie Jean Theide

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
produced since 1988
platinum, 18k
photograph by Todd Flashner

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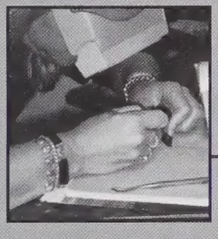

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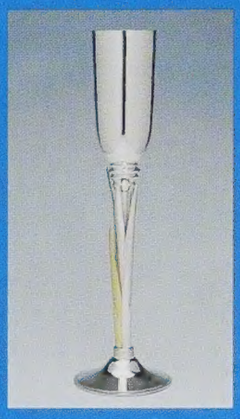

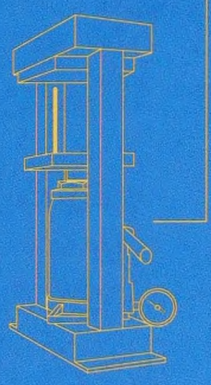

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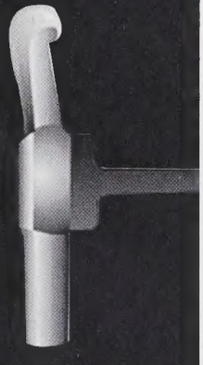

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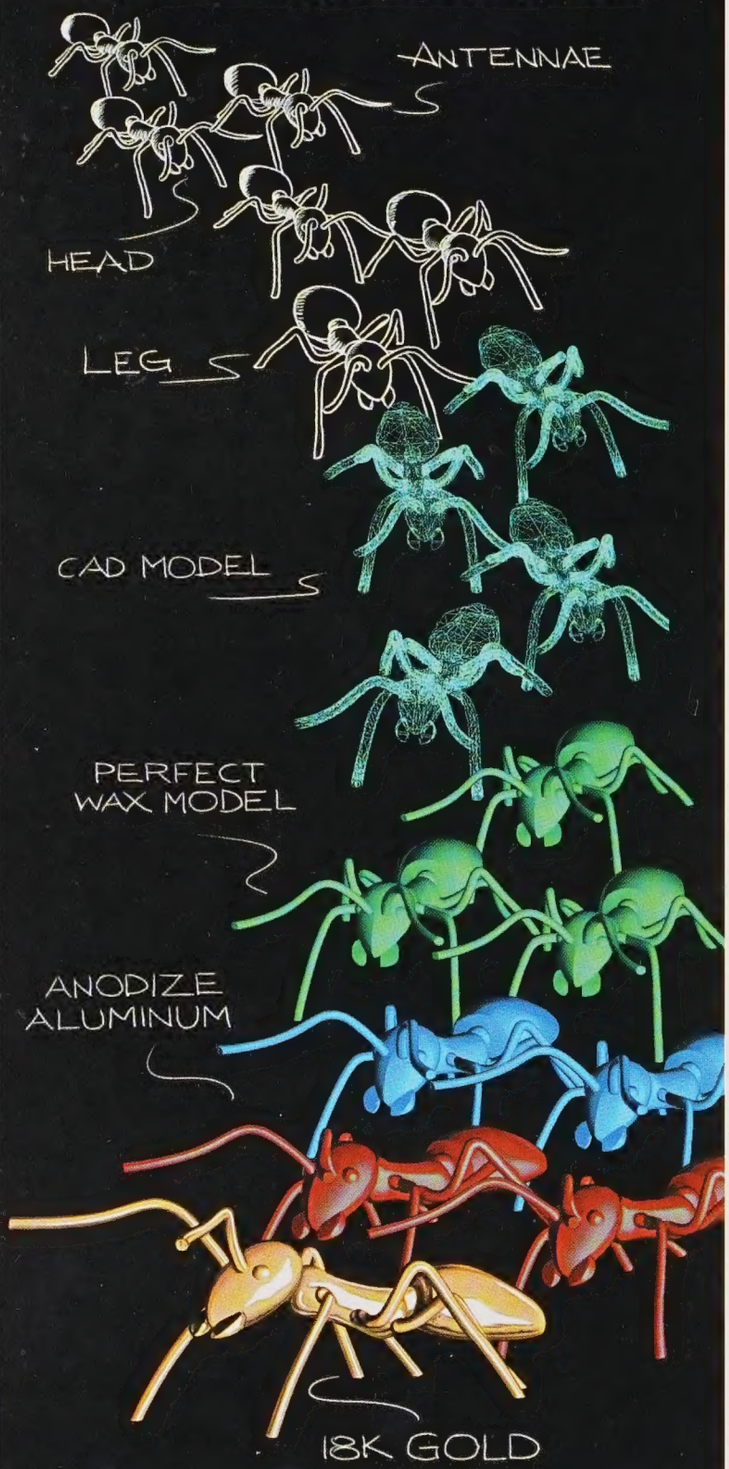

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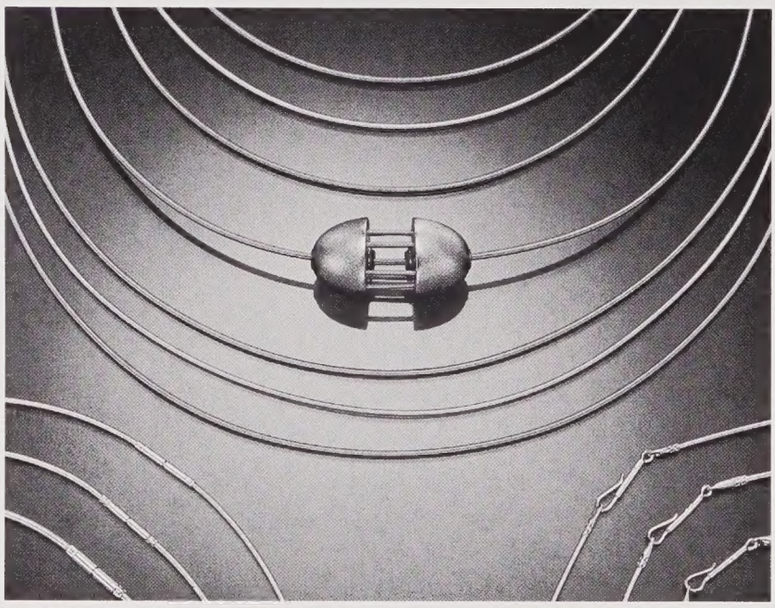

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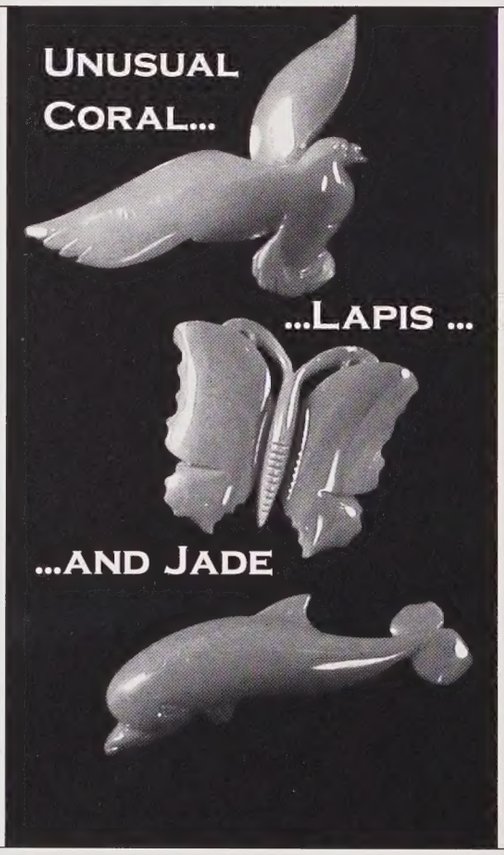

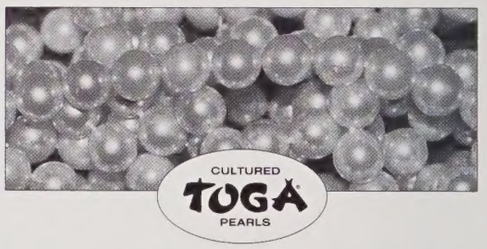

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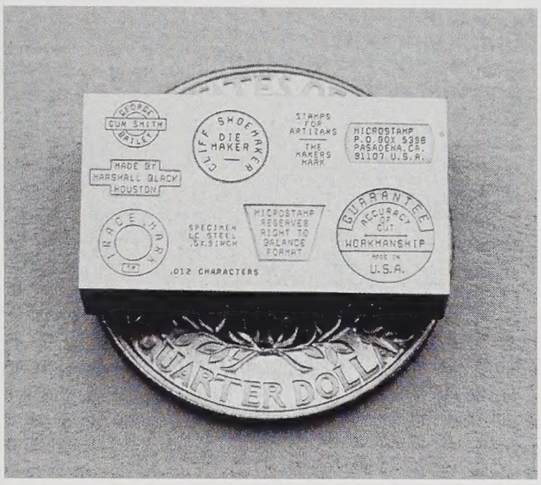

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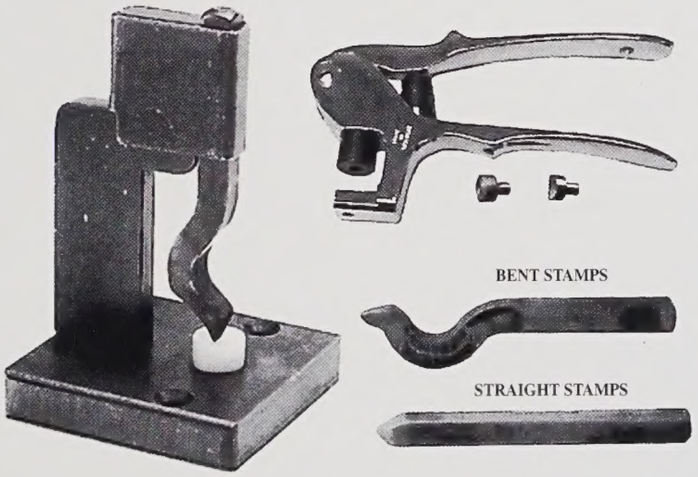

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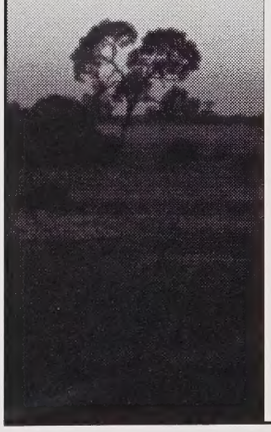

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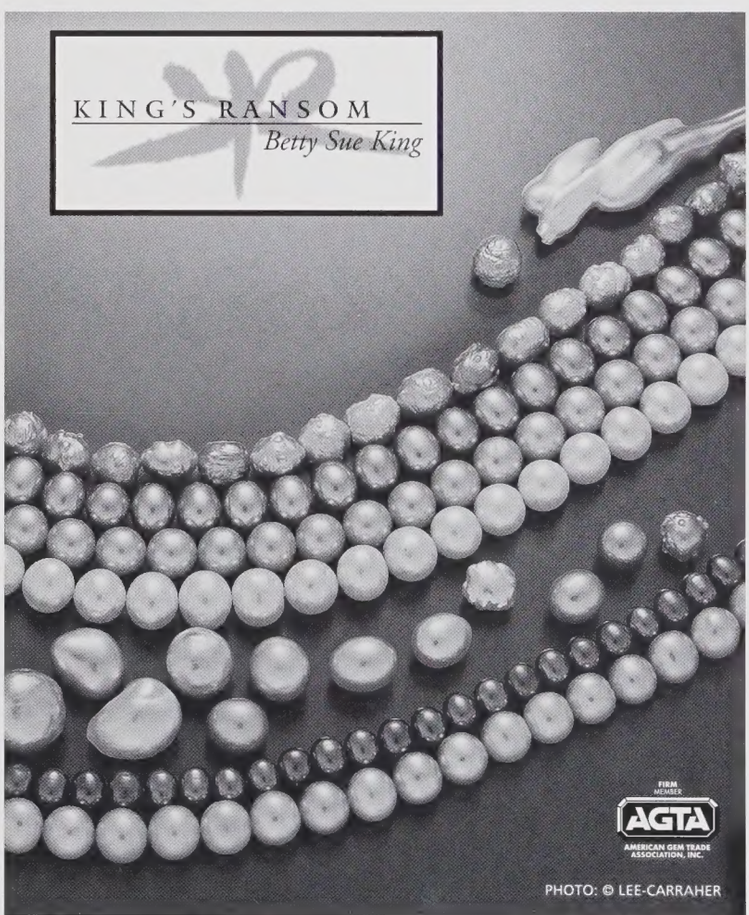

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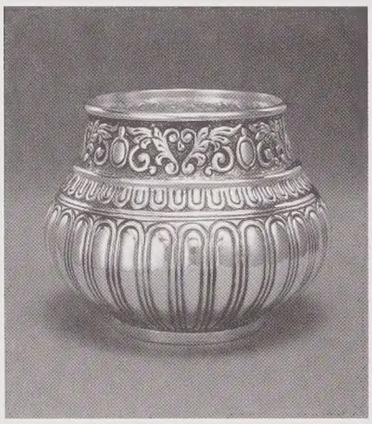

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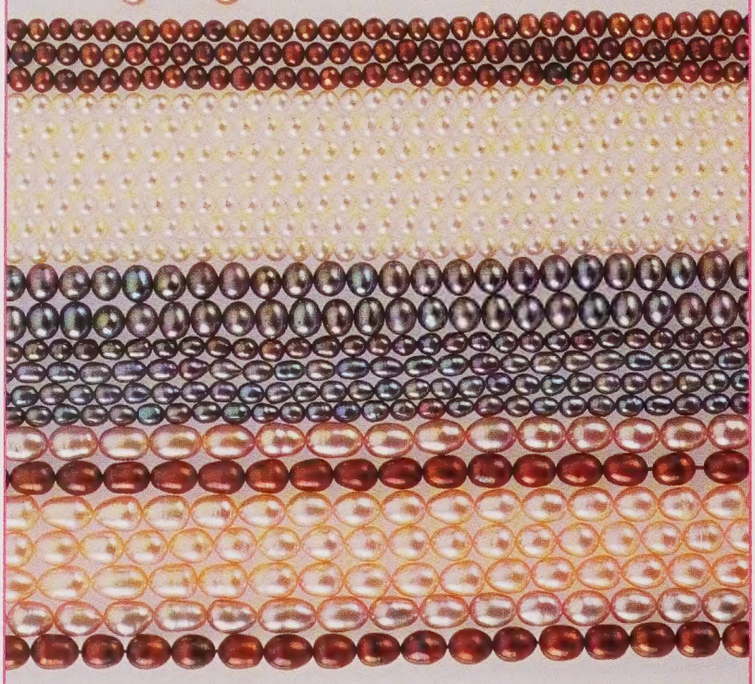

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METALSMITH Index of Advertisers

92nd Street Y 51
Aaron Faber Gallery 13
Allan A. Goldman, Inc. 58
Allcraft 59
Alpine Casting 71
American Craft Council 10
Appalachian Center for Crafts 53
Arrowmont 56
Artemis Gallery 2
Art Tech Casting 70
BBC Design Group 60
Belmont Metals, Inc. 65
Bergin Clarke Studio 56
Beta Diamond Products, Inc. 63
Billanti Casting Company 63
Bonny Doon Engineering 57
Camp Laurel 52
Castaldo 72
Charon Kransen 12
Chester Book Company 58
Chris's Cables 62
CraftSummer 51
Danish Silversmith 65
Dawn Hale Design 11
E.B. Fitler & Co. 66
Eugene McDevitt 66
Facere Gallery 2
Firedesign 69
Fred de Vos Wax Workshops 53
Frei & Borel .....IBC
French Designer Jeweler 13
Grobet 58
Harper Manufacturing 63
Hauser & Miller 71
Helen Drutt 1
Hong Kong Lapidaries 65, 68
Hoover & Strong 61
Indian Jewelers Supply Co. 71
Interlaken School of Art 57
Idyllwild Arts 56
Jack da Silva Metal Design Studio 52
J. Cotter Gallery 1
Jewelry Arts Institute 54
Johnson Matthey 68
J.P. Stachura Company 67
Kerr Corporation 60
King's Ransom 67
Koka Metalsmiths 66
Larry Paul Casting, Inc. 67
Leaders In Travel/Club Med 55
Maurice Goldman & Sons, Inc. 62
Mendocino Art Center 54
Metalliferous 71
Metalwerx 51
Microstamp, Inc. 63
Mobilia Gallery 1
Myron Toback, Inc. 67
Nimba Forge & Anvils 64
Obsidian Gallery 2
Omni Richmond Hotel 55
OXOXO Gallery 2
Patina Gallery 11
Patania's 12
Penland School of Crafts 53
Peters Valley 52
Progress Machine & Tool Corp. 65
Reactive Metals Studio 66
Revere Academy 53
Robert Bentley Gemstones 70
Robyn Dufty 60
Rio Grande .....BC
ROY Studio 12
SAT, Inc. 64
Savannah College of Art & Design 54
Sculpture to Wear 12
SNAG 11, 3, 64, 70
Stone Coast Gems 50
Susan Cummins Gallery .....IFC
Touchstone Cener for Crafts 56
Tripp Lake Camp 52
University of Kansas 55
Valentin Yotkov Studio 68
Velvet da Vinci 13
West Dean College 55
Whitney Boin Studio 5
William Richey Designs 9
Worcester Center for Crafts 57
Yaw Gallery 1,13
YWCA NY 51
Zoltan David 7

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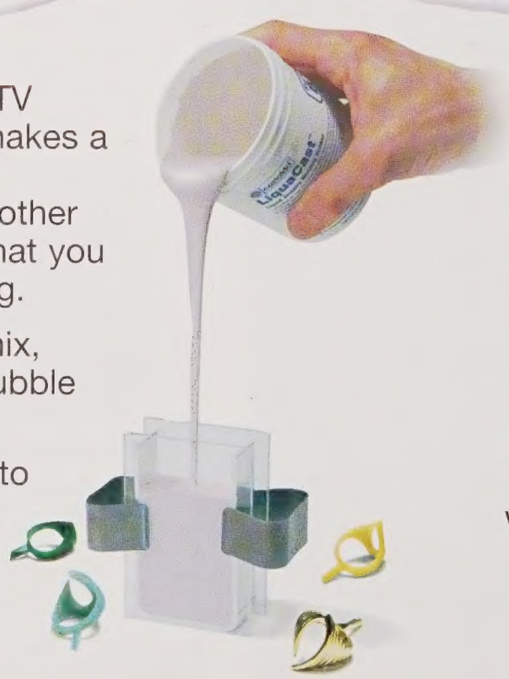

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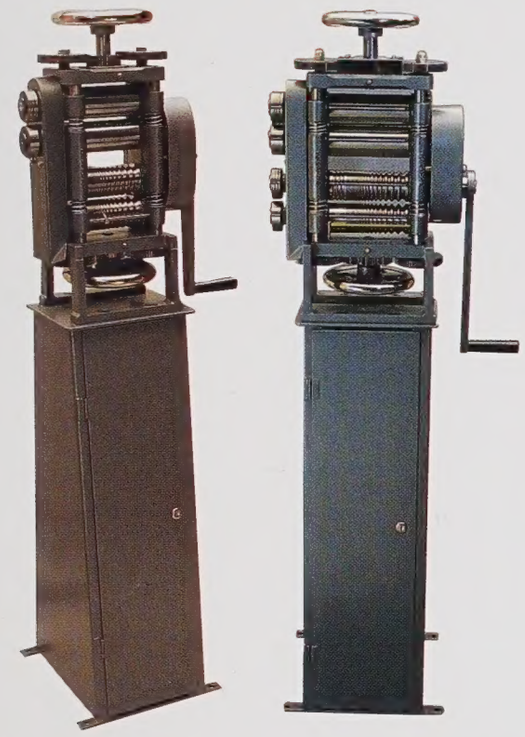

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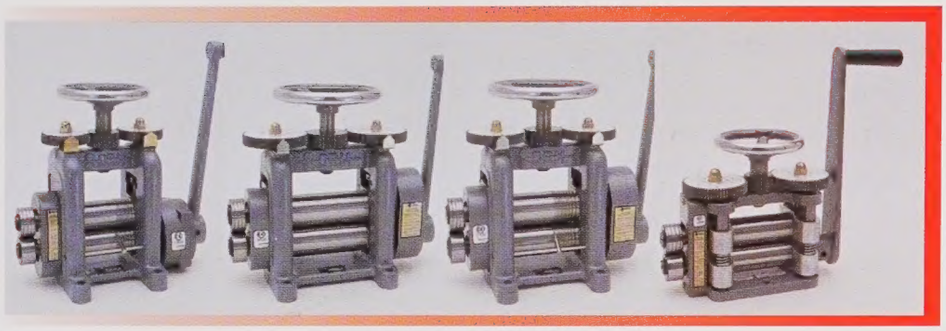

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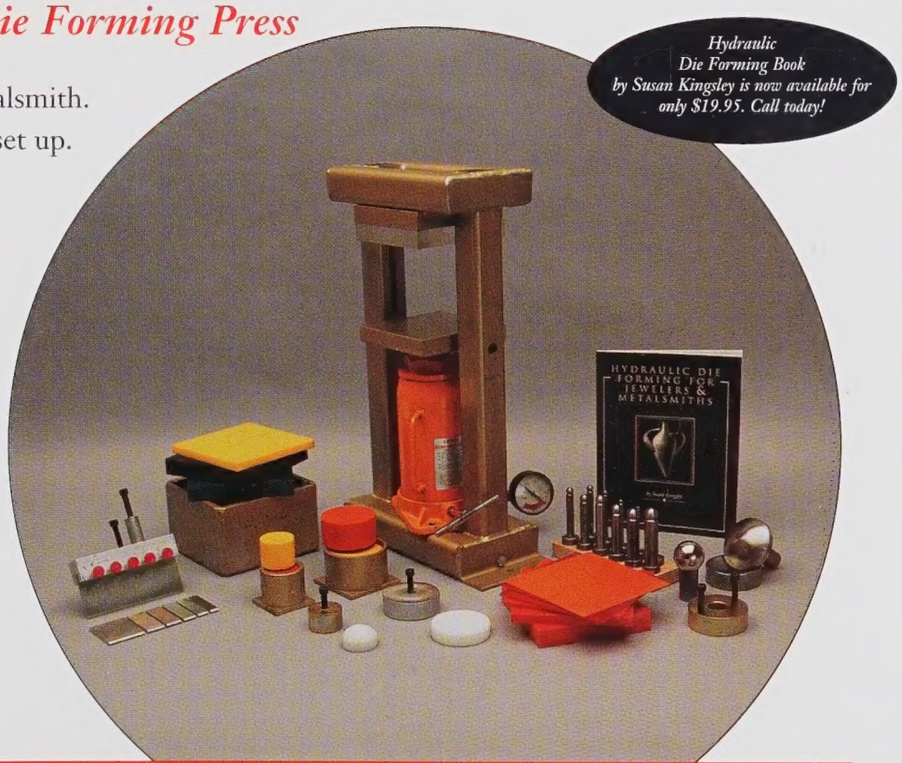

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